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مركز دراسات الشرق الأوسط  
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CENTRE FOR MIDDLE EASTERN  
AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

## THE ROAD TO SHAYKAN :

Letters of General William Hicks Pasha  
written during the  
Sennar and Kordofan Campaigns, 1883

edited, with an introduction  
and notes by M.W. Daly



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# LOCATION MAP



A hundred years ago, on 5 November 1883, an Egyptian army under the command of an English officer, Lt. General William Hicks Pasha, was annihilated at Shaykan in Kordofan by the Sudanese forces of Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi. The destruction of that army, which had been sent to put down the Mahdi's rebellion against the Turco-Egyptian regime, paved the way for the siege and capture of Khartoum in 1885 and the establishment of the Mahdist State. The revolutionary regime founded by the Mahdi and administered by his successor, the Khalifa Abdallahi, remained in power until September 1898, when it was destroyed at the battle of Omdurman. Thus the Sudanese succeeded in throwing off one colonial power, Egypt, and were among the last in Africa to fall to the onslaught of a second colonial power, Britain. The letters published in this volume are a source for the study of the former phase: the Mahdist revolution in its military aspects, and, especially, the dying days of Turco-Egyptian imperialism in the Sudan.

The Sudan had been conquered in a series of campaigns begun by Muhammad Ali, the ruler of Egypt, in 1820. By the mid-1870s Egypt possessed a sprawling empire in the Sudan, stretching from Darfur to the Red Sea and to the sources of the Nile. With the Egyptian occupation came modern innovations, important especially in the fields of communication and warfare. The introduction of the telegraph allowed relatively rapid contact with far-flung posts, while steamers on the Niles allowed the penetration of previously isolated regions. Trade increased, in ivory, gum, and other products, and in slaves. A modicum of security was imposed in the north, while in the south traders carved out virtual kingdoms for themselves among the technologically inferior peoples of the region. The Turco-Egyptian ruling institution, like that of the Ottoman Empire of which, legally, Egypt and its dependencies were parts, was of great ethnic diversity. Thus, in Hicks's letters, we find references to Albanians, Turks, Circassians, Egyptians, "Arabs" (meaning northern Sudanese), and "Sudanese" (meaning African southerners). Increasingly in the 1860s and 1870s Europeans too were employed in the Sudan as officers and officials, adding another, volatile element. By the



late 1870s, although Egypt was over-extended in Africa, Egyptian rule had brought the Sudan closer to the Mediterranean and European worlds, had achieved a degree of internal stability, and had precipitated important social and economic changes. But within a few years the Egyptian empire itself was to be destroyed by the Sudanese, who rose in jihad against their foreign rulers.

The relative importance of the various causes of the Mahdist revolution are still a subject of some debate, but they may be summarised as follows: the unpopularity of the Turco-Egyptian regime and its policies; its relative weakness in the first years of the 1880s, as revolution then invasion wracked Egypt itself and left the administration of its Sudanese dependency militarily and financially crippled; the charismatic appeal of the Mahdi and his message; resentment at the recent curtailing of the slave trade; the introduction of European innovations and European officials; and a reaction of traditional Sudanese Islam against the government-imposed hierarchy of ulama. By far the most important reason for the success of the revolution, however, must have been the critical state of Egypt in the early 1880s, its government under siege and then under British control, its finances in chaos, its army humiliated by the British at Tel al-Kabir; its Sudanese provinces ruled capriciously by often incompetent and grasping officials with no interest in the place and its people or in their good government. The Mahdist revolution thus occurred when Egypt was least able to react to it, and its success was at least in part a measure of Egypt's decadent rule.

The Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abdallah, the son of a Dungolawi boat-builder, was a Sufi shaykh of studious and ascetic ways who, in 1881, at about the age of forty, proclaimed himself the Mahdi, the Expected Deliverer, whose coming to restore justice to the world had been foretold in Muslim traditions. From his retreat on the island of Aba in the White Nile south of Khartoum, he began a campaign of propagandizing his mission and urging resistance against the regime, which was branded as evil and corrupt. The government at Cairo was pre-occupied with the national movement led by Col. Ahmad al-Urabi, and the

administration at Khartoum was slow to act. Not until August 1881 were government troops sent to Aba Island, where they were ambushed and forced to retreat. The Mahdi and his followers, in a conscious re-enactment of the hijra of the Prophet, set off for Jabal Qadir in the Nuba Mountains. There his followers, called Ansar (again in emulation of early Islam), again successfully ambushed a government force sent against them and wiped out a strong patrol led by Yusuf Pasha Hasan al-Shallali. These victories over the government greatly enhanced the Mahdi's prestige and brought many new converts to his cause. The tribes of Kordofan now rose sporadically in revolt, against which the isolated government posts, defended by inexperienced troops and incompetent officers, could not hold out. By the autumn of 1882 only El Obeid and Bara remained in government hands, besieged by the Mahdi's forces. Both were to fall later, in January 1883.

In September 1882 a British expeditionary force routed the Egyptian Army at Tel al-Kabir and ended the Urabist movement. Although the British thereupon occupied Egypt, there was no desire on the part of the British government to annex or even openly to administer the country. The full seriousness of the gathering storm in the Sudan began to dawn on the Egyptian government, however, and steps were taken to retrieve the situation there and thus, perhaps, some of the lost prestige of the new khedive, Muhammad Tawfiq, and his government, who were subject to British orders. While Britain therefore refused to send troops to the Sudan or to accept responsibility for events there, it allowed the appointment by the Egyptian government of Col. William Hicks, a fifty-three-year-old retired officer of the Indian Army, as chief of staff of the forces in the Sudan. The relief of the besieged garrisons of Kordofan and destruction of the Mahdi's power were his main objectives, but a short campaign against the Mahdists in the Gezira, south of Khartoum, was to be undertaken first to secure the White and Blue Niles. The letters published here describe Hicks's experiences from the time of his arrival in Cairo in January 1883, until 4 October, when he was en route to El Obeid.



Perhaps more than any other primary source for this period Hicks's letters show why, despite the superiority "on paper" of the Egyptian Army in the Sudan over its opponents, the Hicks Expedition was from the start doomed to failure. Indeed, the letters emphasise the apparently insurmountable problems he faced. His army was composed mainly of the "old" Egyptian Army of Urabi, which had so recently been routed at Tel al-Kabir and then disbanded; many of the troops had been sent to the Sudan in chains to prevent their escape, and considered service in Kordofan the equivalent of a death sentence. Morale was therefore consistently and understandably low. The Egyptian officers were often dilatory and uncooperative. Military discipline was poor. Training was of a low standard. Military intelligence was almost non-existent or, when it was received, was frequently inaccurate or even deliberately falsified. The few European officers were, in Hicks's view, almost without exception incompetent, and none had staff experience. Only one of his European subordinate officers (and he was commissioned only during the campaign), his interpreter, Major Evans, understood Arabic. Aside from Evans, the European officers who took part in some or all of the campaign were Colonels H. W. R. De Coetlogon and John Colborne; Majors Martin and Farquhar; Captains Massey, Walker, Warner, and Herlth (the last an Austrian uhlan); Lieutenants Morris and Mattiaga (the latter an Austrian). Hicks also mentions his butler, Brody, and the expedition's European doctor, Rosenberg.(1)

In addition to purely military handicaps, the civil and military authorities in the Sudan presented Hicks's campaign with other problems. At the time of Hicks's appointment the governor-general of the Sudan was Abd al-Qadir Pasha Hilmi, an experienced commander who had scored some successes against the Mahdists in the Gezira. He was superseded in February 1883 as governor-general by Ala al-Din Pasha Siddiq, while Sulayman Pasha Niyazi became commander-in-chief and thus Hicks's nominal superior. Hicks was assured, however, that he would have actual control and that he was not given nominal command because of the possible effects on Sudanese opinion of a Christian's occupying that post.

The position was complicated by Abd al-Qadir's remaining in the country on military duty even after his successor had been named but not publicly proclaimed. Hicks's relations with these officers are well-documented in his letters, which present, from his point of view, a picture of intrigue and deviousness, corruption, and incompetence that sapped his energy and severely hampered military operations.

Thus while the Egyptian Army in the Sudan was certainly superior to the Mahdists in military resources, especially modern arms, it was poorly staffed and composed of men who lacked not only military skills but also a strong will to fight, especially against the forces of a charismatic holy man with a string of seemingly miraculous victories to his credit. But Hicks's letters indicate another reason for the disaster that befell him: the military skills with which he himself was equipped to deal with his many problems. Hicks was preoccupied with detail when he should have concentrated on strategy; he was reluctant to deal firmly with either his superiors in Cairo or his subordinates in the Sudan; he repeatedly reached sound assessments of his predicament and logical decisions as to his future plans, only to abandon these decisions for unsound reasons. Much can be explained by his lack of experience of the Sudan and the Egyptian Army, to which he brought preconceptions that could not be fulfilled. His greatest error was to mistrust his own judgement despite recognizing in September 1883 the limitations of his officers and men; despite a continuing lack of military intelligence which today seems almost incredible and which provided not only no knowledge of the enemy's strength or whereabouts, but also no knowledge of the water supply available between the Nile and El Obeid; despite apparently sharing the opinion of high British officials in Cairo that the best strategy to follow against the Mahdi was retention of the Nile, the Gezira, and the eastern Sudan while abandoning, at least temporarily, Kordofan and Darfur; despite a last-minute realisation that he could not maintain a line of communication between his Army and its sources of supply on the Nile; yet he marched into the interior. Why did he not insist on a defensive strategy? Why did he not at least refuse to leave the Nile until

firm military intelligence was available? With the western Sudan already lost, why was it necessary to launch a campaign into Kordofan at that specific time?

Hicks's letters provide some possible explanations: the call of duty, a super-abundant confidence in the decisive advantage of modern arms, ambition, a lack of experience against the Sudanese, an insufficient sense of proportion, and even simply blind faith. Hicks's undoubted personal courage was not balanced by prudence; his justifiable complaints and worries were never satisfactorily resolved, yet he pressed ahead anyway. It is unlikely that any officer could have emerged victorious from the Kordofan campaign in the circumstances Hicks faced, but it is reasonable to assume that another commander might have insisted on the defensive strategy. When in early August 1883 Hicks was finally named publicly as commander-in-chief, he possibly exaggerated the importance of this change and felt that he had no choice but to go on since he had for long complained of his anomalous status as his chief impediment.

The blame for the Shaykan disaster must be apportioned not only to the army and its officers, however, but also to the parts played by the British and Egyptian governments: the latter for its ignorant determination to take the offensive, the former for allowing it to be taken. The British government sought to avoid responsibility simply by disclaiming it. Hicks's letters clearly show, however, that Britain's refusal to become involved applied largely to public involvement, and was therefore not only unrealistic but irresponsible. Britain, after all, was in control of Egypt, Hicks was a British officer who certainly looked upon his mission as one undertaken with British approval and involving British prestige and political objectives. He took counsel with British officials in Cairo before he went to the Sudan, and he continued to communicate with them throughout the campaign. An assertion of British responsibility, which was certainly warranted by Hicks's official reports, would have averted the Kordofan debacle and left intact a large force which the Mahdi would sooner or later have had to confront in circumstances more favourable to the government.

Documentary sources for the study of Hicks's Sudan campaigns are inevitably incomplete. The poor quality of the Egyptian Army's military intelligence, the competing interests of its general officers in the Sudan, and the state of communications between the Sudan and Egypt are three reasons for this. Additionally, the very fact that all the European officers and newspaper correspondents present at Shaykan were killed has resulted in a lack of detailed written evidence on the conduct of the campaign. The last official report to be received from Hicks was dated 3 October, the last letter (published here) was dated 4 October. Nevertheless, among sources of value may be noted the so-called "Diary of Abbas Bey", written by an Egyptian officer present at Shaykan, and found on the battlefield of Omdurman in 1898. This diary, which gives important details about the events on the march in Kordofan, is now in the library of Windsor Castle and has been published by 'Abd al-Rahman Zaki (ed), Yawmiyat 'Abbas Bak, Cairo, n.d. An English translation of the original, with various notes by F. R. Wingate (into whose possession, as director of Military Intelligence of the Egyptian Army in 1898, it came) and others, is deposited in the Sudan Archive of the University of Durham. A translated extract, "The diary of Abbas Bey", was published in Sudan Notes and Records, XXXII, 1959, pp.179-196. According to the memoir of Rudolf von Slatin, Col. Farquhar and Edmund O'Donovan, a correspondent of the Daily News who accompanied the expedition, also kept "note-books" of the campaign, which Slatin later saw,\* but these have not been located since. The Report on the Soudan by Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart (published as Egypt No.11 (1883) c. 3670) was written just before Hicks went to the Sudan and supports many of Hicks's observations about what he found there. The memoirs of Geigler Pasha, the German Acting Governor-general at the time of Hicks's arrival in the Sudan, provide useful insights into the period.

\* (See Fire and Sword in the Sudan, London, 1896, pp.241-2)



An English translation by Richard Hill is forthcoming. Giegler shared Hicks's low opinion of his European officers and of the Army generally, but also criticized Hicks himself. One of Hicks's officers, John Colborne, who was invalided to Egypt before the Kordofan campaign, published a rather self-serving account in With Hicks Pasha in the Soudan, London, 1884. Frank Power, a correspondent for The Times, was briefly among Hicks's entourage, and his Letters from Khartoum, London, 1885 contain useful impressions.

A very important, detailed account of the massacre of Shaykan itself and the events leading up to it can be found in Ismet Hassan Zulfo, Shaykan, Abu Dhabi, n.d. Brief accounts in English are in Wingate's Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan, London, 1891, 2nd ed., London, 1968, wherein long extracts from various documents are also published; P. M. Holt, The Mahdist State in the Sudan, Oxford, 2nd ed., 1970, pp.69-73; A. B. Theobald, The Mahdiya, London, 1951, pp.51-63; P. Clark, Three Sudanese battles, Khartoum, 1977, pp.1-26; and Charles Royle, The Egyptian campaigns 1882 to 1885, 2nd ed., London, 1900, pp.235-50; a description of the battlefield is to be found in E. F. Aglan, "Sheikan Battlefield", Sudan Notes and Records, XX, 1, 1937, pp.138-45; upon which accounts this introduction is partly based.

All the letters included herein were hand-written by Hicks to his wife, (Sarah) Sophia Dixon. They were retained by their descendants until presented to the Sudan Archive of the University of Durham in April 1979 by Hicks's great-grandsons, Messrs. Michael and Colin Mackenzie Smith. Their mother (Hicks's grand-daughter) had, after the early deaths of her parents, been raised by Sophia Hicks. In the 1930s the letters were damaged when a bottle of kettle-"defurring" acid was spilled over them. Upon their presentation to the Sudan Archive the letters were cleaned by brushing and mechanical washing, were fumigated and treated with a fungicide, de-acidified, and subjected to florentine repair with Japanese tissue. They are preserved in the Archive, catalogued as 600/1.

For this edition I have adopted the following method. Because Hicks seldom divided his letter into paragraphs I have done so when I thought it appropriate. Similarly, the reader will not be surprised that a general on campaign wrote hurriedly and often without punctuation (except a dash), so I have inserted or altered punctuation for ease of understanding. I have usually retained Hicks's spellings, but have sometimes standardized his various spellings of the same word. The italics are all Hicks's. A few elisions, indicated by ". . .", were made to omit redundant, irrelevant, or strictly personal material, and in some cases entire paragraphs have been deleted without any indication in the text. A few elisions were necessitated by my inability to decipher the written word or words.

I should like to thank Messrs. Colin and Michael Mackenzie Smith for their kind consent to the publication of these letters. I wish to acknowledge also the assistance of Mr. Richard Hill, who provided some information for the notes, and Dr. R. S. O'Fuhay, who read and commented upon a draft. Miss Lesley Forbes deserves thanks for two reasons: the conservation of the letters and for providing information about their provenance. Miss Heather Bleaney has patiently edited the draft. Finally, I wish to thank the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies of the University of Durham for assistance in publishing this edition.

M. W. Daly,  
Durham, June, 1983.

London, 10 January 1883

I hope you are all right and cheerful. I felt it awfully packing . . . . but I think I am doing my duty and that keeps me up. I trust that I shall with God's blessing come back to you again and hope this work will lead to some good appt. in Cairo where you can come with me. I don't see why we should not settle the business before the very hot and unhealthy season sets in - and I think we shall.

Cairo, 19 January 1883.

I have so much to tell you I hardly know where to begin. I have been in close confab. [with] Genl. Baker Pasha . . . . and I dined with him last night and talked over many matters - (Sartorius is on his staff),(2) It appears that I am to go up to the Soudan really to command - the Egyptian General is to obey me - and the troops now number 10,000 and more coming up. Lord Dufferin (3) has settled with the Khedive that I am to be invested with full powers - in fact I am told I shall be made Comr. in Chief soon after my arrival at Khartoum. I am now to be made a Major General (and Pasha). All this is very confusing . . . especially with regard to the state of affairs at present in the Soudan. I suppose you read of the catastrophe wh. occurred the other day (4) to the Egyptian troops there . . . . There is no doubt that they must have neglected all precautions as regards outposts, sentries etc. The black troops are being taken from various Egyptian Garrisons, being relieved by Egyptian Regts., and sent to Khartoum for me - they are the best fighters. I have also 4,000 Turks and Albanians up there and more coming. They require organising as at present they are without any organisation - but when that is done they will be the best I shall have. They will form 4 or 5 strong Regts. I shall put one of the best English officers I have with each. I must tell you that I have already some 8 English officers - some of them apparently excellent ones . . . . Lord Dufferin says I may [take as] many as I like - and they will be liberally dealt with - as

they [are] all upon probation and their future entirely depends on my report, they [should] give me no trouble. I must [tell] you that curiously enough I have two German officers and one of them is a Count Seckendorff (5) . . . isn't it odd . . . They had both gone on to Khartoum before I arrived so I have not seen them, but Baker tells me that they weren't very keen on having them so they have not treated them very liberally as regards pay. I shall have some business in settling the different positions of all these men. One of the first things I do will be on arrival at Khartoum to establish fortified posts up the Nile. I am taking several batteries of Gatling guns - wh. I shall have to instruct the men in the use of. I expect they will be very effective on the Mahdi's troops. There are 4,000 Egyptian troops isolated and cut off in a fort (6) about 200 miles inland . . . and the Mahdi has filled in all the wells between us and them . . . making it apparently impracticable for us to relieve them - this is one of the puzzles I have to solve as soon as I can. You may imagine with all these things suddenly thrust on me how overwhelmed I feel with responsibilities, but I shall rise to the occasion I hope.

The officers who are going with me have been calling on me for approval this morning. Their appoint. or not is placed in my hands. This I think is very civil on Baker Pasha's part, who might have kept the patronage entirely to himself, but his giving it to me strengthens my hands. About Baker Pasha: he is one of the nicest men I have ever met - so evidently with a head on his shoulders and he looks as if his life had had some heavy cloud over it. Sir Samuel (7) has just been in to call on me. He is very useful to me in the way of suggestions . . . I have been introduced to newspaper reporters. I think the 'Daily News' will give you most news in future. You might take it in as well as The Standard.

4.P.M. Just returned from Lord Dufferin. Most civil and kind [and] will do anything I require of him. We are to have a council tomorrow or next day - Lord D., Sir E. Malet, (8) Genl.[V] Baker Pasha, and myself - to arrange mode of proceedings for the campaign. I don't think I mentioned that it was at first

intended to give me the command of one of the Regts. of Gendarmeries, before Baker Pasha decided to offer me the post in the Soudan. The first would have been the easier and pleasanter position, but it wouldn't do to decline this, tho' the anxieties and responsibilities are enormous. I only hope that confidence in myself will increase as I go on in the work. At present I can't help feeling anxious as to my ability to conduct all this. I have engaged an Interpreter (Govt. pay him) and am to have an English-speaking Egyptian officer attached to me as A.D.C. I shall have another English officer on my personal staff who speaks French well. I visited the Minister of War (9) today - also called on Malet and Sir Archibald Alison. (10) 9 p.m. met Sir Evelyn Wood (11) at dinner who told me Lord Dufferin has proposed to him that they should all meet me - Dufferin, Baker, Malet, and Wood tomorrow or next day about the plan of campaign . . . . It is rather formidable but as I have no present acquaintance with the country and can only draw out a plan of proceedings consistent with the knowledge I have they are welcome to it for what it is worth. I can only tell them I shall do my best according to my lights and no man can do more. I am delighted to hear from the N.A. (12) officer who has been drilling my Gatling gun Turks and the officer who inspected them that the whole 50 are first rate. I am going to the range to see them myself on Monday.

Sunday 9 a.m. . . . . Lord Dufferin has not yet sent me Col. Stewart's report (13) from Khartoum. I hear it is being copied to go home to the Foreign Office. It is a very complete one and I shall be glad to read it before we have our Council. Col. Stewart (11th Hussars) is to remain at Khartoum for duty under the Foreign Office I suppose. I expect he will be of great assistance to me when I get up there. All the officers and men (Egyptians) or most of them are Arabi's men and they are just now very depressed as they seem to believe they have been sent to the Soudan to be got rid of to die or be killed. I shall set to work with my Arabic Interpreter to put this out of their minds - but what man could have a more extraordinary position than mine - command of Arabi's late troops and a host of undisciplined Turks and Albanians? I spoke about an English doctor accompanying us



yesterday and hope to get one. As the 8 or 10 English officers will be the very backbone of the Army, they are too valuable to be left to the risk of Egyptian medical treatment. (Monday) I was with Sir Evelyn Wood a great deal yesterday and he is a most pleasant fellow and most civil. He promises to back me up thoroughly in all I do. He was most anxious to go on this expedition himself, but they could not spare him from his present work.

I have just taken on two Militia officers, Massey and Walker . . . . They will get £400 a year. I am now going to see the Khedive and dine with Lord Dufferin tomorrow.

2 p.m. Had an interview with the Khedive. Some men are born great, others achieve greatness, some have it thrust upon them. I am to be of the last !! He tells me the present Governor of the Soudan (14) is to be relieved at once by another who is to act under me, and the whole army there is to take no action whatever until my arrival. Sir Evelyn Wood is helping me in all ways. Lord Dufferin will do all I require and if I only rise to the occasion as I hope I shall, and make a good business of the unpromising material I have, the upshot may be very great, but the responsibilities and anxieties are rather overpowering at first.

Wednesday, 24 January 1883. I think I told you I saw the Khedive and he was most civil. Today he has made me General and Pasha so you must address me [as] General Hicks Pasha. I think he has taken a great fancy to me - he has ordered a special steamer to convey me to Souakin from Suez, has telegraphed to the Governor of Souakin to have special riding dromedaries for me to cross the desert with my party to Berber, and ordered a special steamer to convey me from there to Khartoum. I am going to take my officers to present them to him in a day or two, meanwhile we are getting Egyptian regulation uniforms made to appear in. I will send you a photograph of us all. I called upon Sir Archibald Alison today. He is most interested in this campaign. He told me that altho' I had a matter of great difficulty in hand

it was one of great importance and he congratulated me on having such an opportunity of distinguishing myself. to Egypt it is most important that this campaign should be a successful one, as the retention or loss of the Soudan depends upon it. I am in hopes I may carry it through successfully.

I don't think I shall be able to enter upon the great campaign against the rebels under the Mahdi or False Prophet until after the raining season, as there is no water for a large body of men, the Mahdi having filled in the wells, so the garrisons of El Obeid and Bara (6,000 men) will have to hold out until I can come to their assistance 8 months hence; but the Senaar District south of Khartoum is in rebellion and I can put down that - and a few successes in the field will give the army confidence for the larger campaign. I found the men who had been instructed in the use of the Nordenfeldt guns were very far from perfect, so I am not taking them with me. I leave two officers to go through instruction with them and to bring up the men and guns afterwards. I take up six officers, a correspondent of the 'Standard', and a missionary Bishop. (15) I think we shall leave on Monday . . . . I shall have some 12,000 men and I hope by leading them well and teaching them to use their arms to do away with their dread of the Mahdi and make them fight against him properly. All here recognise the difficulties I have to overcome: the Khedive, Lord Dufferin, Sir E. Wood, Sir A. Alison, everyone - and if I can only get through it well and keep my health, I shall make great things out of it. Anyhow I am doing my duty. And I feel that I shall be successful. If I am, I save half Egypt to the Khedive - and relieve our Foreign Office of a great anxiety.

I saw the War Minister yesterday [and] he wants me to leave on Tuesday - but they themselves are so dilatory in the work they have to do that I doubt if we [will] start. At the last they tried to put me off without horses, but I have after much trouble induced the Govt. to buy me 12 - or they are now trying to do so - there are no Govt. horses worth anything - and they trouble me about Interpreters . . . . I had ordered two official ones, one at £400, one at £180, but the War Minister grumbled at the

expense and said he would send me two English-speaking ADCs who would be good interpreters: one came, and was a fool, utterly useless, so I am putting my foot down to get the others taken on. It is so vitally necessary that I should know that my orders will be correctly given and that information is correctly translated to me that I will insist on efficient interpreters. Today all offices are closed (Friday) and nothing to be done. They treat time in Egypt as worth nothing. I have engaged two Native servants - one an Arab cook with one eye (a very sharp one), pay £6.6 a month; the other a black, most correctly dressed in European clothes with fez - talks nothing but French (Arabic as well of course), and exceedingly good French, and in manner is quite a gentleman, also at £6.6 a month.

Monday Jany. 29th [1] have been very busy since I last had time to write. I had to get indents for all sorts of stores and material passed by the War Minister and have asked for two naval officers as A.D.C.s. They can take charge of the steamer on the Nile in case of a row [sic?], and can both talk English well. I have asked for two batteries of Krupp guns to be sent by the Nile to Khartoum, another rocket battery, and three more Nordenfeldt guns. I have insisted on the necessity of having some cavalry (there are some with the Force), and I am now going to demand authority to pay every officer and man in the Army of Soudan every sixpence of pay that is in arrears - I shall put my foot down in this and I shall say I won't go until it is done. The best of Armies becomes demoralised and mutinous if they are not paid. How much more so would mine composed of men we have beaten in battle, blacks who are kinsfolk of our enemy, and undisciplined Bashi Bazooks . . . . (16) News came yesterday that one of our cut-off garrisons in Darfur had surrendered and joined the Mahdi's forces.(17) I hope the example won't be followed by the others, and yet I don't see how they are to hold out [-] if so it might spread to our troops in wh. case the whole of upper Egypt would be lost.

I did not go to church yesterday as just as I was going the Governor of Souakin (18) came to see me and I had to talk with him, but I hear the clergyman mentioned us in his sermon.



Sir Samuel Baker has been talking to me and last night Sir S., [Valentine] Baker Pasha, and I sat until 12 o'clock talking matters over, and there is no element of success or even safety unless a high Sheik or Priest of the Mahomedan religion, a holy man, descendant of the Prophet, is sent up with me to preach against the Mahdi, to issue proclamations that the English are the protectors and friends of the Mahomedans, by going with me to show the alliance between us and Mahomedanism. Besides this I must take the money and pay the troops all arrears myself, and the Government must raise some 10,000 Arabs to fight. If all these things are done I shall go. Sir Samuel strongly advises me to refuse to do so otherwise. The Prime Minister, (I9) Khedive, and Lord Dufferin have had this impressed upon them today and I hope the conditions will be carried out.

(Tuesday 30) I got good news last night. I am to have 350 Turks with me and 200 follow - volunteers (!) I hope to make out of these a body I can depend upon. I am also assured that I shall be able to pay up all arrears of pay to the troops - and the holy sheik with the green turban will accompany me to Khartoum preaching against the Mahdi. Sir S. Baker tells me that I must insist on these points and refuse to move if not conceded. I am going to the War Office at 10 with all my officers, to pick out horses. I selected three for myself yesterday, but I fancy there will be a howl over the prices, for as far as I can understand the Government will pay for them. Bought 14 - pretty good. I have no doubt my letters will contain much that the papers would like to get hold of but nothing must be sent to the press from them. I dare say I shall have to do a great deal that the Exeter Hall people would disapprove of - they will never understand that desperate circumstances require desperate measures . . . .

[No date] I have appointed Lt. Col. de Coetlogon . . . . my 1st A.D.C. and personal asst. I have 7 English officers and two naval and four Army (Egyptian) officers on my staff, besides a staff officer (personal) of the Khedive's to arrange all my journey to Khartoum . . . . Affairs in the Soudan could not be worse. Senaar [is] in rebellion, and some 6000 men in Kordofan

will have either to starve, be killed, or go over to the Mahdi, and I can do nothing for them. I shall overrun Senaar with a large army as soon as I get up there and crush the rebellion if I can only get my men to fight. I shall have the Turks to trust to I hope, and if I do my best I can do no more. The Khedive was quite affected when he shook hands at parting.

[No date] I feel all this sort of thing a burden but it is necessary. If I can only lick the Soudanese into shape - Oh, for a Brigade of English or Indian troops - but all I have are put entirely under my thumb, English and all. I can dismiss anyone at once, but when there are no Articles of War or Queen's Regns. [Regulations] one must be a despot to govern. Am I equal to it - that is what I have to prove to myself. I am taking up £1000 in dollars as secret service money and I have as much as I like at my disposal at Khartoum. If I could only buy the Mahdi's head I would. In the cause of humanity it would be justifiable, for hundreds and thousands are losing life through him and the rebellion . . . . I anticipate a world of anxiety there [Khartoum] for it is a web of intrigue I am going into. One can believe in no one. The Khedive told me today that many there, tho' professing loyalty to him, were really on the other side. You may let all the family see this letter but impress upon all not to talk of what I say and above everything don't let the papers get hold of anything. I shall allow only the best side of affairs to be sent to the papers; nothing will pass to the Press but what I see first . . . .

[Sir Evelyn Wood] is taking the greatest care to drill and perfect 60 artillery men for me who will follow when fit, with six Nordenfeldt guns . . . . Lord Dufferin . . . . is most cordial and quite sees the difficulties of my part, as does the Khedive also. If with God's help I can only get them all out of this fix, I should be a marked man. I pray daily for guidance, support and courage to tackle it. I have a good set of men with me but we are such a handful. I am so disgusted: all my stores and equipment have been packed without the boxes being numbered or an inventory of contents taken as I expressly ordered, so I shall not know where to find anything . . . .

Aboard ship, bound for Suakin, 5 February 1883

We left Cairo on Friday at 12.30 p.m. and arrived at Suez at 8.30 p.m. . . . A Bishop and no less than 6 priests turned up to accompany me to Khartoum. I would not let them embark until I had telegraphed to Cairo - wh. I did, protesting strongly against their going - but I am obliged to take them to Souakin. I shall take care they come no further with us. They are Italians. Their Bishop is from Verona - Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa. We embarked at 4 o'clock and I was received by the ship's officers and a guard of honour of marines . . . . We have run 10 knots an hour ever since we left Suez and expect to reach Souakin on Wednesday at 12 noon. We have outrun the other steamer, . . . . which left with us with my Egyptian ADCs and my 360 Turks on board. I think we shall be two days at Souakin before we can organise everything for the march . . . . I have hopes that I shall be able to get my two batteries of Krupp guns to Khartoum from Souakin by their making a detour to Kassala and crossing the desert from thence. If they can do this it will save some weeks. At present it is proposed to send them up the Nile. They are too heavy altogether to cross by the route we are going . . . . I told you that Lord Dufferin suggested I should become Governor Genl. of the Soudan and I told him I should not think of taking that post. I shall hope for the 2nd [in command?] Instead of the Gendarmerie . . . .

(Thursday 8th Feby) We arrived at Souakin last evening. We had come in the night before and had tried to find anchorage on the reef outside but it was too dangerous . . . . We were bringing a new Governor for Souakin who takes the place of Ala al-Din Pasha who has been [appointed] . . . as Governor Genl. of the Soudan to relieve Abd al-Qadir Pasha, it is rumoured so as to give me a new man without jealousy to work with at Khartoum. Rashid Pasha, the new Souakin Governor, went on shore about 3 p.m., was installed, and made preparations for my reception. [At] about 4.30 I landed, the marines on board drawn up and saluting and the band playing. When I landed I found the troops paraded. The Artillery fired a salute, [and] the troops

shouted in Turkish, 'Victory to our Pasha'. The Governor and staff [were] in full dress, [as was]. . . the Khedive's A.D.C. who had been sent on to make all preparations for me before I was taken to the Governor's house and sat to receive all officials and officers of the Garrison who passed me saluting. Coffee and sherbet was served to me and all my staff. I was shown the quarters wh. had been prepared for us and afterwards left under another salute (for the steamer where we were to dine), led by the hand by the Governor to the boat. We came ashore in the evening, having previously sent our kit, and took up our quarters, fine large rooms close to the sea - they are inside the palace and all furnished like divans: sofas along three sides of the room; they gave us tables, chairs, and lamps and we had a good night's rest.

This morning the Governor sent me a sheep and he came to visit me after breakfast. There are no less than five Europeans here who all came to visit me this morning. I sent word I was very busy, as I was, so they sent in cards and went away, to my relief. I found the stores from . . . Cairo had all been packed in such bulk that they were not distributable for camel carriage, so I am obliged to have much unpacked and repacked in smaller boxes wh. I am having made. It is a great nuisance. Our horses arrived last night. I inspected them this morning and found all . . . uninjured. Major Martin has just come down to see after their being reshod. My staff has so increased in number that I have sent to Cairo for 6 more horses. I hope they'll land here quickly. My first charger is a beautiful animal 5 yrs. old, bay, with a long Arab pedigree; my second a strong grey Arab (aged), an unsociable horse of good head; my third . . . very strong. . . I am writing to Cairo to expedite my Krupp and Nordenfeldt guns as I am most anxious to get them.

I have also written about the Italian Bishop and priests - they went to the Governor and asked to go on to Khartoum before me, but I have refused to allow them to do so or accompany me - they must come up afterwards. The Mahdi has seven monks and nuns (20) prisoners in chains, and the Italian and Austrian Governments have sent these men to Khartoum to endeavour to

release them. The Governments of those countries have directed their Consuls at Khartoum to open communication with the Mahdi and endeavour to ransom the prisoners. The Bishop told me that Lord Dufferin and Sir E. Malet were aware of the action taken by the Italian and Austrian Governments, but I have written for instructions by telegraph as to whether this independent communication with the Mahdi is to be allowed. I hope no trouble will occur between our Foreign Office and the I. and A. Govts. in consequence of the step I have taken in delaying the clerical party. Of course one feels for the poor prisoners, but I am convinced it would never have done for me to escort a large party of priests to the Soudan - a report would be circulated that we were coming to convert, and destroy the Mahomedan religion, and the Mahdi would gain followers. One Italian missionary embraced Mahomedanism and is with the Mahdi.(2) The others refused, and are in chains.

I have a plan of operations wh. I hope may be successful but I won't put them on paper as secrecy is imperative if the plan is to succeed. As to the relief of Obeid and Bara, I'm afraid that is at present quite impossible and I sadly fear there will be two catastrophes there. I am beginning to discover the characters of my English staff. One man I think is useless, another is too weak, but the rest will be all good men I think. I was much troubled by a quarrel amongst them on board the steamer - however I managed to make both sides take my view of the case, and settled matters, but it worried me a good deal, especially as I had to pitch into the officer I had apptd. 1st A.D.C. and personal asst. I enclose you a list of the English officers and their friends. I propose every week to send Sartorius a telegram from Khartoum, "All well" - in time for the English mail from Cairo. He will write to you by the mail that he has heard we are all well or otherwise. On receipt of Sartorius's letter I want you to send post cards to all the friends in the list saying you have been requested to communicate the news date so and so from Khartoum. By this you will get much later news than by our letters . . . .



Ariab, 19 February 1883

I am writing this from nearly half way across the desert between Souakin and Berber. We march at night now as the heat is so excessive in the day that both man and beast are done up. My face is skinned and I am a pretty old stager. Poor de Coetlogon was not only skinned but his face swelled so his eyes were scarcely visible. When we leave this place wh. we do tonight we have two stages of 87 and 82 kilometers with no water, so I am filling here (where there are two wells) all our water skins and iron barrels. The Egyptian A.D.C.s have disobeyed my orders and brought small skins instead of large ones and 100 instead of 200, and this morning they report 15 leaky. I have fortunately sent on to Berber for some camel loads of water to meet us, so I think we shall manage. The worst of it is I cannot depend on the guard over the matter. I flogged two men the day before yesterday for neglect of their duty in this respect. I hate having to flog, but there is no other punishment I can inflict. We must now march all night long, every night, until we reach Berber, wh. I hope to do in four days . . . . The Khedive's A.D.C. has gone ahead to prepare things for me. I think we shall have two steamers, or one steamer and a diahbeyah [dhahabiyya] from Berber to Khartoum. I shall stay at Berber two days but I have declined the Governor's house as it will be more comfortable and cleaner on the boats. We are to enter Berber in state - all in uniform and riding our horses, a bodyguard of soldiers on dromedaries, the usual parade of troops, salute of guns and reception by the Governor and officials, all necessary for such a swell of a Pasha as I have bloomed into. We are all well but one man, a naval Lieut. (and A.D.C. to me); he has been very bad with pneumonia and gave in, saying he should die. I really thought he would but he is better. I wonder more are not ill, for the work is hard, the heat in the day very great, and [it is] bitterly cold towards morning . . . . What troubles me more than anything is the impossibility of relying on my orders being carried out: officers and men in the Egyptian Army are equally bad. I reduced a Capt. to the rank of Lieut. the other day but it seemed to have no effect for I caught him neglecting his duty next day. The Egyptian is the most hopeless man to make

a soldier out of: he has no patriotism, no loyalty, no courage; there is no discipline amongst them, and neither officer or [sic] man has any feeling of honor [sic]. It is simply heartbreaking to try to do anything with them - there is nothing to work upon.

We met two native caravans coming from Berber. They tell us that the Mahdi, on hearing that the English were coming, had left the vicinity of Obeid to return to the mountains S.W. of Darfur [sic] with 12,000 men.(22) If he has done this there is no more anxiety about the safety of the 6,000 men shut up in Obeid and Bara. It will be most fortunate, for we couldn't have relieved them. They also said the rebellion in Senaar had quieted down in consequence of the same news, and [of] the departure of the Mahdi. I am most anxious to get to Berber where I can get information by the telegraph from Khartoum . . . . We came up with the Bashi Bazooks yesterday, encamped here, and we shall pass them on our way to Berber as we march quicker than they do. They went on a couple of hours after we arrived. They look like fighting, but also like thieving and murdering. They have been before the terror and the curse of the country, but what is to be done if the Egyptian is such a cowardly skunk as he is - some one must be found to do the fighting. I believe the whole of this rebellion and the Mahdi's movement have been set going by slave dealers in Cairo itself, I mean former slave dealers. The attempted abolition of the slave trade by the late Khedive injured these men in their tenderest point and they hoped by wresting the country from the Egyptian Govt. to reestablish a flourishing trade in slaves wh. is now only carried out with difficulty and with consequently much less profit.

(Tuesday Feby. 20th) . . . . We met a Maltese last night on the way, he was 4 days from Berber . . . . He confirmed the news of the Mahdi's having retired to the hills and left Obeid free on hearing of our coming, but said there was still trouble in Senaar, where there were 15,000 men now 15 miles from the town. There had been a fight, he said, in wh. the Govt. troops were successful; (23) of course, one has to take all one hears, cum grano - .

Fragment of a letter [Berber], n.d.

We should be able to hold our own, fortified in Khartoum, if the worst came to pass, but unless England came forward to assist there would be no troops whatever to help us. If the Mahdi now goes to Darfur all the garrisons there must surrender - and of course the effect of all those successes will be tremendous in the country, and I have not a single trustworthy soldier to take against him. Both Bara and Obeid fell before we left Cairo, and the Khedive knew nothing about it.(24) The Governor of this place (Berber) told me last night he had no news. I believe he lied and knows all about it. In this country everyone lies and deceives everyone else. We had a wonderful reception in this place. I will give you an acct. of it in my next.

One day from Khartoum, March 3rd 1883.

. . . . this is the country of lies in little as well as big things. I told you in my letter by Korosko of the news sent me by Col. Stewart from Khartoum of the fall of Obeid and Bara to the Mahdi, and consequent disturbance amongst the Arabs about Dongola. It is a great misfortune this - 7,000 men in all have surrendered to the Mahdi, with all the stores, arms, ammunition of both places, but the surrender as I hear now was not after a fight but the places surrendered on account of starvation. He did not massacre the garrisons, as was expected, but has them prisoners. There are also some 6 or 7 European prisoners (Greeks I suppose) besides the priests and nuns who I mentioned before. He chained these unfortunate priests and nuns and kept them exposed for 5 days to the sun. When he found that they preferred death to giving up their religion he released them from the chains but kept them prisoners. They must have endured torture. They are Italian and Austrian subjects.

We got off from Berber at 210 p.m. on the 26 Feby . . . We have 2 steamers and 7 sailing boats. The steamers are very old, engines exceedingly rickety (one doesn't like to investigate the boilers too closely). One is only 24 horse power, the other 36 - so you see they are quite small - but altogether we are



comfortable enough. I have a cabin at the stern all to myself, the large cabin is shared by the officers I brought on board with me, viz. Col. de Coetlogon, Col. Farquhar, and Mr. Evans, my Interpreter - all the other officers remain on the other steamer, including the Khedive's A.D.C. Ahmed Bey Hamdy . . . .

Friday 2nd March. The dy. Governor of the town of Khartoum met me here with the head of the Police and a following . . . . They had ridden out 60 miles (poor devils). The dy. Governor is a most unintelligent-looking man. He couldn't give me an idea of how many troops there are in Khartoum. He said he had never thought about it - and one would think [he] was quite an uninterested party. He told me that Abd al-Qadir had telegraphed from Senaar on Tuesday that he had cut up the rebels there (25) (the Chief escaping tho') - this is good news if true. I was afraid he might have another disaster. There must have been some orders sent to Khartoum by the Khedive since I left Cairo consequent on [the development of] the rebellion in Senaar, for the last issued before I left were "Concentrate troops at Khartoum and take no military action until the arrival of General Hicks". I thought at the time that it would be a dangerous thing to allow the rebellion to go unchecked altogether for 6 weeks or two months pending my arrival, but I hope there will be an opportunity of my taking a column against the rebels there, that I may give my men a little confidence and gain some prestige. The Mahdi has established himself for the time I hear at Obeid with 36,000 (?) men, but no one knows what he may do or where he may go. I think it improbable he could come to Khartoum. It is true they can do without water much better than we could, . . . they might carry each man 3 days water perhaps but they could do (?) without. The same difficulty attends their march (tho' in a minor degree) as mine to attack them. I would not attempt it with a force of less than 6,000 men . . . . If I have a little time to organise my forces and to give them some instruction in shooting, outpost duty, and some simple field manœuvring I shall perhaps be able to make a good account of the enemy. But no man ever had such unpromising material to work [with], half probably sympathising with the Mahdi, the remainder without spine, discipline, patriotism, and loyalty - cowards

officers and men - licked by us when under Arabi and sent up here as they believe to be killed or got rid of . . . .

I feel ashamed of the fuss . . . . made over the affair [of Tel al-Kabir], and the time will come when this will be known to every one - it is to very many now - and some are ashamed of the honors [sic] and decorations showered upon them for such an affair. It was magnified . . . . to make political capital for Mr. Gladstone and cover his former failures - honors [sic] and decorations in bushels conferred to keep men silent. Wolseley's speech about it being "the first time since the Crimea that the British Forces have met a disciplined Army in the field" was . . . . enough to make one sick. Why a few hundreds of Afghans, or Bengali mutineers (?) would have driven these skulking cowards out of Tel el Kebir as easily as our men did . . . . I was sorry to hear yesterday that Col. Stewart is leaving Khartoum immediately on my arrival. Lord Dufferin asked him to keep him well posted on the Soudan's affairs, so when Stewart has left I shall be the representative of the Foreign Office I suppose. I see K.C.M.G. out of this! Sir William and Lady Hicks - ! ! £10,000 backsheish from the Khedive for having settled the Soudan, orders of the Osmanieh and Medjidieh, etc.,etc.,etc ! ! !

Khartoum, March 9th 1883

I never knew such people as they are here. I have an English A.D.C., Brody and 3 grooms all to look after 3 horses, and yet I discovered this morning that my horses had no grass of any kind for 4 days, had been fed entirely upon grains - a wonder they are alive - no one of all these men had had their eyes sufficiently open to discover that there was no grass about the stable, and the grooms had been too lazy to report it. I have just returned from a visit to the Bashi Bazooks, who are encamped about two miles down the river, just at the junction of the Blue and White Niles. They are mostly Albanians and look a far superior lot of men to the other Bashi Bazooks I have seen, and their colonel seems a soldierlike man. He promised me that he

would be responsible, that if I took them with me on the expedition I am going on, they should remain steady and fight in line, not every man on his own hook. So I shall take them, as I like their looks. I find that the Khedive has kept his word regarding the position I hold here, for the A.G. Acting Governor, Gov. General and both generals of the army are entirely at my orders - they submit to me in all things. I take them about with me on my staff! I have ordered a firing parade (ball) tomorrow for the Infantry, and the next day practice for the Artillery. I want to see how they aim, and how the latter cut their fuzes [sic] for shell practice. [Today I] inspected about 3,000 Egyptian Infantry and I never saw a finer body of men to look at, their physique is wonderful. I made them a speech, having it translated as I went on. I told them that the Khedive had sent me to command them and that if they behaved well in the campaign I promised them they should at the end of it go back to their villages, that I would take many of them back myself, [that] they were not to suppose they were sent to the Soudan to be got rid of, that I had told the Khedive they had thought this and that he had commissioned me to tell them as I did, and that they would learn that at all events an English officer's word was kept. I told them their good and happiness was the first thing with me and if they had any grievances or complaints to make I would always listen to them and redress if possible. I told them that when I saw such a fine body of men with Remington rifles in their hands I couldn't believe it possible that any number, however large, of undisciplined, ill-armed men could stand before them. They had only got to stand steady and fire low and without hurry and they would sweep their enemies from the earth.

I find I have altogether a force of about 11,000 men - counting the 3 Battalions now with Abd al-Qadir in Senaar and the two Battns. under Hussein Bey (26) which I shall pick up.

The man I am going to take action against is named Faki Moosa (27) - he is a Wakil or Agent of the Mahdi and with rebels amounting to 10,000 men has taken up his position opposite the island of Abba (the place where the Mahdi was born [sic]) on the White Nile. Hussein Bey in command of 1,600 Egyptian troops at

Kaua (28) is frightened and calls for reinforcement. I am going to start in about 9 days with 1 Battery mountain guns, 1 Battery Nordenfeldt guns, 300 Bashi Bazooks, [and] 3200 Egyptian Infantry. I shall go down [sic] the river in steamer and boats to Kaua and pick up Hussein Bey and his 1600 men. I shall then have some 5,000 men of sorts and 6 guns - besides 3 Nordenfeldts wh. I expect to arrive in 6 days as they leave Berber this morning. I shall also take 4 rocket tubes with me.

I have in the last three days raised a reconnoitring corps of 80 men mounted on ponies, or small horses, and armed with either fire arms or swords. To get this corps up for immediate service has been one of my greatest anxieties. All the Egyptian disasters may be traced to their want of knowledge of their enemy's position - they did no scouting. I shall be able to use these men at once - a few days will teach them sufficient for my purpose. I have also sent overland to Kaua 400 camels with packs etc. to be ready for me there if I found I had to leave the river bank and follow into the interior when I should require some land transport from Kaua: these camels will be able to follow my movements along the bank of the river. I shall divide my forces at Kaua: cavalry scouts, 2 guns, 2 Nordenfeldts, [and] 2000 Infantry march by land; [the] remaining guns, Nordenfeldts and Infantry go up river in steamers and boats in tow . . . . The enemy will probably retire into [the] wood before the column proceeding by land. They will be shelled. The river party will take up position . . . . on [the] river by a deepish ford. [The] guns and Nordenfeldts will be brought into action from steamer and flats in tow, and a column will be landed by the ford, so surrounding the rebels. "Inshallah" we'll make a clean sweep of them . . . . The enemy is not likely to try to escape away from the river, but will hold their position wh. they consider strong. I have so much to do in way of preparing carriage and provisions that I cannot get away before 9 days; besides, I want to take the Nordenfeldts.

Khartoum, March 13, 1883

Since writing to you last Friday (9th March) I have been hard at work as usual. I have had a ball firing parade of the troops and I find they fire into the air - they are a splendid body of men to look at but they will not learn to use their arms. I have ordered a daily parade and all my officers to go down to the camp for the instruction of the men, and I have had printed in Arabic for circulation amongst them the following -

H. E. Maj. Genl. Hicks Pasha remarked on parade last Saturday that the particular fault of the men in using their arms is that they do not hold their rifles firmly against their shoulders - and they pull the trigger with a jerk. The consequence is that they simply fire into the sky, do their enemy no harm, and leave themselves open to attack, whereas by firing low, letting off their rifles by a steady pressure on the trigger and no jerk, they hit and disable their enemy and are themselves safe. With these rifles, properly used, no enemy they may meet would have the slightest chance against them - they may laugh at any number - but if they by firing badly throw away their advantage they have to suffer for their own carelessness.

Fire low and without hurry.

Fire low. (29)

I hope this may do some good. Yesterday I had a parade for the practice of the battery of mountain guns. It was tolerably good, but I had to stop without seeing any shell practice as people were crossing the range in all directions, no precautions having been taken by the Brigadier to prevent this.



[The text of a telegram recently sent]

To Sir Edward Malet -

'Some decision with regard to the positions of Ala Al-Din and Abd al-Qadir Pashas is most urgently required from Cairo. There is now much confusion in the administration, so much distrust and intrigue that I doubt if the two successes in Senaar compensate for the chaos caused here by Abd al-Qadir's departure before Ala al-Din's arrival. Pray get a decisive order sent here. I am hampered by the state of affairs. I can get no active co-operation and no full information. The Government intended to have new heads of the Civil and Military here, viz. Ala al-Din and Suleiman Pashas, [but] by Abd al-Qadir's departure these intentions were completely check-mated. The Civil and Military administrations are still kept in the same hands with the disadvantage of the new men being in a false position here and the old and still existing authority away from Khartoum, [with] consequent suspicion and distrust. Ala al-Din Pasha has yesterday only shown me a telegram directing us to consider whether with regard to Abd al-Qadir's operations he should be suspended, or Ala al-Din should wait until these operations are over. Ala al-Din Pasha says he will do as I think right. This is not a matter for me to decide - the Government should consider the situation and order.'

So much for that business. I think it is quite unfair to make me sole judge of who should be Governor General of the Soudan. Suppose I had Ala al-Din proclaimed and Abd al-Qadir command [the army], and afterwards there was a disaster in Senaar under the General I should send to take his place - all . . . would howl at me and say 'Here is a man who after a week's experience of the Soudan takes upon himself to remove at the very

time he was successfully carrying out his . . . . [duties] a man who was . . . . fit for command, and puts in an incapable General'. On the other hand, by keeping Ala al-Din Pasha in his present position instead of allowing him to proclaim himself Govr. General as he really is, there are all sorts of intrigue going on which are ruinous to the proper administration of the country. The Egyptian Govt. knows the position of affairs and should take the responsibility itself.

Now, here is my telegram to Baker Pasha - from whom I have not had a single line since I left Cairo. I know he is awfully busy but think he might have telegraphed or written to me -

Telegram:

The orders to concentrate black troops at Khartoum have not been carried out. I have not a single black Battalion. I think this should be looked to at once. I am going with these men to Senaar but I doubt them and should have no confidence with them in Kordofan. In fact there is no force here fit for the Kordofan Campaign. It must be improved and we must have cavalry. Pray represent this strongly - '

I am glad to say that the Nordenfeldt guns should be here next Saturday - and I have some good Albanian and Turkish soldiers - a few hundreds - if they'll only fight under orders instead of each man on his own hook, they ought to be valuable.

Wednesday, 14th March. 10 p.m. I cannot tell you how disgusted I am with everything in this place. I am surrounded by intrigue, deception, and liars. The situation is too disgusting. I cannot believe a single thing I hear and I cannot get anything done. I order, procrastination is the rule - and there is no shame in anyone. One party is intriguing for Abd al-Qadir and the other for Ala al-Din and they tell me tales and lies of one another; they hide information from me to bring the opposite party into disfavour, and they won't work together. It is too distracting and my English officers are no help to me - they want judgement

and many of them increase my difficulties. Even de Coetlogon I am disappointed in. Abd al-Qadir took away the best of the troops (and against orders) with him. I couldn't help thinking this morning how times change and affairs too. Here I have 4,000 of Wolseley's enemies under my command. He got great kudos for breaking them - my great anxiety is lest they should run away when I take them before the rebels. I can only form them in squares to fight, as every one says they will bolt if in any other formation, and in a square one loses half one's firing power. I am instructing them daily and this morning I rode amongst them and made several men aim at my eye and pull the trigger so that I could see if they raised the muzzle of their rifles. Who would have thought a short time ago when they were behind the trenches at Tel el-Kabir that an English officer would be asking them to pull a trigger at his eye at two feet distance - and they wouldn't slip a cartridge in. I have had my remarks on their firing, and advice, printed and it will be distributed to them tomorrow. I don't know whether I told you that the Obeid garrison did not surrender to the Mahdi until they had eaten up every horse, dog and animal, and some say corpses, and were starving. They thought they would all be butchered - but up to this they have escaped. A man came in today who had escaped. He says the Arabs have quarrelled with the Mahdi because he kept all the money that was looted, and many have left him. I believe I might sow dissension in his camp if I could only communicate with his chief officers, but the Acting Governor here is so supine and incompetent that I can't get his assistance, and of course I am ignorant of the people and country.

Thursday, 15th. 8.a.m. I have been for a ride and visited Suleiman Pasha (30) who is the senior general here. He is an Albanian (31) and so far superior to the Egyptians, but I found it difficult to come to my point with him, his conversation is brim full of oriental flattery and humbug, and my interpreter is a bad one. I never know that he is correctly rendering what I say, and very often find him out in mistakes. This is another difficulty in my way. In fact I am surrounded with difficulties. I have sent off my English staff to the camp to superintend the parade this morning themselves without me. I found they had got



in the way of looking to me to do everything, and seemed to think that they were to be merely ornamental. I could get no reliable information about what was going on at Abba and by Kava; so I have sent off a steamer with Major Farquhar and Mr. Evans (Interpreter) to visit the posts and gather what information they can. I hear numbers of rebels have, after being broken up by Abd al-Qadir, joined those I am going after - but I am ignorant of their position and numbers. Farquhar ought to get back on Sunday, and I hope to be off in a day or two afterwards - the Nordenfeldts will have arrived.

I think the only good thing in Khartoum is the breed of donkeys - they are capital animals and go at a tremendous pace. Talking about donkeys, yesterday was the birthday of the King of Italy, so all the civil officials paid a visit to the Italian Consul. The Austrian Consul passed my house; he was in an old-fashioned red swallow tail coat and cocked hat with feathers and mounted on a donkey. He was quite dignified, and no one seemed to see anything comical in his appearance.

Friday, March 16th. To give you an idea of the unnecessary trouble brought on me - yesterday I sent for the first time my English staff to superintend the parade of the troops for musketry instruction. We have to go in a steamer to the camp. My senior Egyptian A.D.C. Colonel Wahabi Bey, was a little late. The English officers in command, altho' they all saw Wahabi Bey coming, ordered the steamer to put off without him. Instead, he stepped from the bank into a boat towing astern, and got on board the steamer, where Col. de Coetlogon, my personal assistant as I call him, [insulted him] before all the junior officers and the crew of the steamer. The consequence was [that] after they returned I had a complaint from Wahabi, who stated he had been degraded in the presence of his inferiors and that he also was a Colonel, and he begged my interference to prevent his being treated in this manner. The English officers said that on getting on board he gesticulated and spoke in an excited and unbecoming manner - etc., etc. Now all this occurred through the want of a little courtesy and judgement on the part of Colborne and de Coetlogon. It put me in the hobble of having to decide

between the English and Egyptian officers of my staff and created a split between them. It is wonderful what little sense they have. Again yesterday evening Major Martin who is about 6 ft. 3 and a giant took it into his head to thrash all the servants at their mess for some neglect or other. The consequence was I had another bother. These men won't stand licking like Indian servants and if it is done unjustly they never forget it.

I have just returned from my ride before breakfast. I went round the fortification they threw up the other day in the way of a long ditch and rampart when they thought the Mahdi was coming. I rode round with Giegler Pasha (32) the Acting Govr. Genl. a week ago. At that time I saw a Gatling gun on the rampart exposed to the heat of the sun wh. of course was ruining the gun carriage, the wheels and body being of wood. I told him to have a grass shed erected over it at once or this valuable gun would be lost through cracking and splitting of the carriage. Today I found it exactly as it was a week ago - nothing whatever done - and this is the way with everything and everybody here. It is no good giving orders. It is no use trying to put things straight. They promise to do what you direct without the slightest intention of acting, and are utterly indifferent, and not in the least ashamed when you find them out.

I have got a return of the Egyptian losses in action with the rebels since August 1881. It is pretty stiff - 16,296 men, 17,669 rifles, 16 guns of sorts (cannons), and close upon five million rounds of ammunition. This includes the men who surrendered at Bara and Obeid (6,200). . . . I think the men I have will behave better. They are more trained - a good many of those who have been polished off were raw recruits, with guns in their hands but no knowledge of how to use them.

There is no doubt but that the situation in the Soudan is a very serious one. With a small and good army I would feel certain of putting down all rebellion and fanaticism in a very short time, but as I have telegraphed, the present force is unfitted for the undertaking. General Suleiman Pasha . . . . [speaks] to me of marching to Obeid immediately after the

rebellion in Senaar is quelled, but this would be on a par with all they have hitherto done and would lead to disaster. I am here to prevent that and I do not agree with him. He proposes to send a small force in advance to clear the wells. This small force would be beaten, and even if it were not, the wells would not supply at best more than 1500 men, and I shall have 4,000 besides animals. At some halting places the wells if cleared would not supply 700 men, and are 35 yards deep, and at Obeid itself water is so scarce that at times it is sold for a dollar a flask (the price of claret). Many of the Mahdi's followers have left on account of the scarcity of water, and yet Suleiman Pasha talks of our taking 4000 men there to fight while wells are cleared, wh. would then not supply the force. I shall not do anything in Kordofan until after the rains provide a supply of water. I have in consequence of this difference of opinion with Suleiman telegraphed to the Khedive that I must be placed in unmistakeable command of the army - no understood command will suffice. If they don't like it, they may remove me: it would be better than being connected with a disaster I have no power to avert, tho' foreseeing it.

Of course they won't remove me, but they will I dare say tell me [that] the orders which have already been sent to the Governor General and Suleiman Pasha are supposed to ensure my advice and orders being carried out. One thing I am determined on viz. that until rain has fallen sufficient to create pools for water supply and until the force here is better constituted and provided with cavalry, I will undertake nothing further than Senaar. I telegraphed to the minister of war for a Battery of Krupp guns. He replies that they have only 8 centimeter Krupps, shall he send them? I have replied 'yes'. They will be heavier than the 5 centimeters I asked for, but at present we have nothing but old fashioned brass mountain guns, and the Artillery men will only secure them if you take them inside your Infantry square !! If the Government had only sanctioned the Indian troops being used for this campaign it would have been settled in little time. As it is, Kordofan is at present lost; the situation of the whole of the Soudan [is] serious in the extreme. I telegraphed to the Khedive's private Cabinet for authority to

sanction the withdrawal of the garrisons from Darfur if the Governor of that Province did not feel sure of his being able to hold his own for a twelvemonth. Ala al-Din and Suleiman Pashas were both against it, but the authority has been telegraphed to me. They will have to fight part of the way but they may succeed in reaching the Nile by the Bahr Gazelle [sic]. It is better than surrender to the Mahdi.

Khartoum, March 21, 1883.

I have sent all my officers off to the camp to the usual parade of the troops for musketry instruction and I have also ordered rocket practice today . . . I had to remain here as I am going to have a momentous interview with Ala al-Din Pasha at 10 a.m. He little knows what is in store for him. I am going [this] morning to cause a revolution in Khartoum. I found matters could not go on as they are so I sent this telegram, of which I enclosed . . . copies by last mail. Last night I heard in reply from Lord Dufferin. He says - 'In answer to your complaints about Soudan - take complete responsibility and give necessary orders, you will be thoroughly supported from here. What you require will be carried out as far and as correctly as possible.'

So I have decided upon my course of action. Today I shall proclaim Ala al-Din Pasha Governor General. I shall recall Abd al-Qadir from Senaar and shall send the senior General Suleiman Pasha to relieve him. I shall order the Genl. Saleh Aga (33) who is with Abd al-Qadir to join me if possible at Kava. He is a good officer who will be glad to serve under me, altho' he would be jealous of Suleiman Pasha. Giegler Pasha who is now Acting Govr. Genl. will revert to his appoint. for the suppression of the Slave trade. All the intrigue going on here will be put an end to, Ala al-Din's party will be triumphant, but I shall get the new brooms to put in a little energy to the getting off of the Column of troops I am taking up the Nile.

There is an enormous deal to be done in the way of transport, provisions, camp equipage, pay, etc. ( I insist on taking all pay due to the men already at the posts on the Nile



and who will join my force - they are 5 and 6 months in arrears.) I am sorry that I have not a single English officer who has ever done staff duty, so I have to do everything. The troops down there, besides being without pay, are in rags (I am taking clothes) and I have discovered that they actually collect grain on the E. or Senaar side of the river, and sell it to the rebels on the W. bank, or Kordofan side, but under the circumstances what can one say to them? I have caused a notice to be published in Khartoum that in consequence of rebels having been supplied with provisions etc. from this place, all navigation of the White Nile is forbidden, and any boats found on it will be confiscated with their cargoes. I expect I shall have to take a good number. Consequent on Lord Dufferin's action at Cairo, I fancy, I have today received replies to my telegrams to the War Minister. He is sending me 800 Cavalry, also a Battery of Krupp guns and an artizan and officer acquainted with construction and use of rockets (the Artillery men here knew nothing about them). These reinforcements will not be in time for this campaign, but I shall have them for the campaign in Kordofan. I have 600 or 700 real Turks, not men bred in Egypt but imported from Turkish territory, and I know they fight well; witness the war in Bulgaria.

(Thursday 22nd March) I have had an awful disappt. this morning. I inspected the Nordenfeldt battery and had targets put up for practice. I took out to the camp several persons - Pashas etc., to see what the guns could do, and the show was lamentable. The men were a perfect mob; not one of them knew his place and what to do, the guns got jammed and wouldn't work, the ammunition was spilled all over the ground, and in fact the whole thing was an utter failure. And these are the guns we were looking to as our backbone. Capt. Walker says the men have forgotten their drill and work in the march up, and will learn it again. I told him I should be ashamed to bring such men on parade, and as to taking them on field services they would be worse than useless. I never in my life saw such a rabble - like a flock of frightened sheep. I ordered Capt. Walker and the subaltern to go from Khartoum to the camp and pitch their tents there and do drill day



and night until they could show me something fit to look at. The men would be utterly useless as they are.(34) I shall attach Brody and Greenburg (35) to the battery and let them each have a gun to fire. These Egyptians are not worth their salt. I could not believe such dolts and fools exist. I have no word strong enough to express my contempt for them. A Regiment of school boys with these Nordenfeldt guns and Remington rifles could hold their own against all the forces of the Mahdi, but these fellows prefer being massacred to fighting I believe. If I hadn't the few hundred Turks I wouldn't take the field. I will pistol every Egyptian I see making a fool of himself as long as I have a shot left.

(Good Friday) . . . . I have now appointed Brody, Greenburg, Capt. Massey and Lieut. Morris to the charge of and to work and fire a Nordenfeldt gun each. The Egyptians will only have to bring up the ammn. for these four guns. I think I will put the other two on the two steamers I am ordering to patrol the White Nile to keep the rebels from crossing. I find there are no wood stations for the steamers appointed between this and Kawa. So [I] have just written to the Governor Genl. to have them established at once on the Senaar side of the river. I have written a Proclamation this morning which I am going to have printed in Arabic and sent into the Rebel Camp. I hope to draw many men away. Here it is -

'I, Major General Hicks Pasha, give notice to all persons that I, an English officer, have come by order of the Khedive to the Soudan with a large Army. I have come to put down rebellion, which assuredly I will do; and to punish evil doers; but I have also come on behalf of the Khedive to redress wrongs and oppression, and give justice to all. I therefore call open all people who have any grievances to bring their complaints before me, and I will give them every possible redress.

'It is only against rebels in arms that I make war. peaceable people will be protected. And any people who have been in arms against the Government, if

they return to their allegiance and their Chiefs come to me, they will be forgiven and their complaints if they have any listened to, and their wrongs or grievances redressed. It is the custom of the English to be just and generous and all may be sure of forgiveness and of getting justice if they return to obedience and communicate with me.'

I have just written to the Governor that I can have no more correspondence about requisitions for stores, carriage, etc., but shall appoint two officers to meet him and Suleiman Pasha at his office, and I expect everything to be settled in a couple of hours instead of a couple of weeks as it would take if they had their way. It is most important that this force should strike a blow at once and the unnecessary delay wh. occurs through the obstructive nature of all officials here is enough to drive me mad. I see the Italian Government have appealed to England to interfere in the Soudan about the Priests and Sisters the Mahdi has prisoners. I hope after I have licked his people where I am going I may possibly get many of the rebel tribes to come in. If my army will only behave well I ought to give them a good thrashing. I shall have 6000 men, and they are estimated at 45,000, but my men are incomparably better armed, and can sweep any number off the face of the earth if they will only keep their heads and hearts and fire steadily. If I get this victory I believe the Baggara tribe [sic] will come in at once and they would be followed by others to a certainty, and I might find the Mahdi with but a small force when we go to Kordofan. He is now said to have 100,000 altogether but I think this much exaggerated. The Chief of the Baggara tribe has quarrelled with the Mahdi on account of his trying to take the loot of Obeid from them. I am opening communication with this Chief and I am to meet him at Dueim. Tomorrow was the day appointed but I have been delayed here by these officials; however, I hope he'll wait my arrival at Dueim. Abd al-Qadir lately took 1500 prisoners, and unaccountably released them and gave them ten days rations to take them home. I can't help suspecting he was bribed. These prisoners should have been offered in exchange for the Priests and Sisters.

I am quite decided that I cannot undertake the Kordofan Campaign until the rainy season has well set in. Enough rain must have fallen to saturate the surface of the ground, and afterwards to remain - the earth absorbs the first few days' or weeks' rain. To attempt the campaign now would be certain failure - the wells are half of them filled in, [and] when all are open and full they supply at best about 1,700 men. They are at this season unreliable, half seem to be dry, and even if open they are about 30 to 40 feet deep and every drop has to be drawn with a rope and bucket. I shall have 6,000 men - a third of them could not at the best of times be supplied. I shall have animals besides. If we had chain pumps we could not draw more water than the wells yield. These reasons are sufficient to prove to a reasoning mind that it would be extreme folly to attempt the campaign now and must end in failure, and yet there are people who cry out about us not going on to Obeid at once. I tell them I am sent to prevent further disasters, not to commit new ones, and certainly not to rush into a certain one. The Mahdi's men hold all the water supplies, they could be beaten, but that wouldn't treble the supply of water.

(Saturday) Another day of worry and trouble. I am troubled on all sides - even by my own officers - and these Egyptian Pashas and the rest . . . drive me mad. They disobey orders, question orders, issue their own wh. are opposed to mine and altogether the thing is too much for anyone to stand. Ala al-Din Pasha said he was afraid to be proclaimed without telegraphing to the Khedive first, so a telegram was sent and the Khedive sends no reply, and here we are in statu quo. I find the letters which were to have been sent from Cairo here by the Khedive's Minister to ensure my orders being attended to in everything military, have never been sent at all. I found the two Egyptian Generals were issuing orders without consulting me, and then it came out that these letters had not been sent. I am telegraphing to Cairo to have these men distinctly told before going on this campaign that they are serving under my orders. It is all very well for Lord Dufferin to tell me to take complete responsibility and issue my orders. If these Military Pashas are not told by the

Khedive that they are to obey me, my taking responsibility is of little good.

I had the mountain battery out this morning and saw them fire shrapnel at 1000 yards - they fired very well. I then had another look at the Nordenfeldts - the men did better this morning - but with no cartridges. I dare say they'll improve, but I shall stick to my four English men with four of the guns.

We shall all set off I hope by Wednesday - 4 Battalions embark today . . . We have every reason to expect complete success if the Egyptians will only stand, and I think we'll make them. It is odd my having an Army who ran away from us at Tel al Kebir, and who I am most anxious shouldn't bolt again (what a victory for England to boast about). I have Arabi's own Regiment.

Khartoum, March 29th, 1883.

I have had a very busy time since I last wrote to you. Ala al-Din Pasha has been proclaimed Governor Genl. amidst great excitement and ceremony at the Govt House. The Khedive's Firman was ready and all the notables . . . assembled. I sat on his right hand at the reception wh. was held, and took first place, much I would say, to the disgust of several Pashas and swells of sorts. There is no doubt Khartoum is full of disaffected men and the Government hated.

There was a [proclamation?] from the Khedive about the putting down of the Slave Trade, as there was a treaty (36) about it with the Sublime Government of England, but I think it illtimed to fuss about that too much just now. Let the rebellion be crushed first and then take energetic measures about the slave trade. We have stopped in great measure the raids of slave dealers and should be content with that at present, not interfere with the people who have slaves in their households and fields and who have had them for years. In 1884 they all become free (37) by treaty and we should let them be now until this rebellion is suppressed and not interfere in disputes between master and

slave more than necessary. They are not badly treated and eventually will become free men while there is no market and few if any raids and atrocities.

The Governor General came to call upon me the day after his being proclaimed and as he knows I have made him he will provide me with what I require here, I hope quicker [?] than the last man has done. I am in great trouble about the boats for transports. I find they have not given me nearly enough and have allowed all others to go away, so I have only been able to send off some 3000 men and am obliged to wait for the return of the boats to send the rest. It will delay me a week. It is too bad. I am sending to seize all boats wh. can be found within reach. I shouldn't wonder if Giegler Pasha had been bribed by the boatowners to let them go. Meanwhile the rebels are gaining strength and confidence. It is a difficult thing moving 6,000 men with English organisation and Staff, but with these . . . . Egyptians and not a single man . . . . who has ever been on the Staff it is too trying. I am so tired of thinking that I cannot even write all I am bothered about I am so sick of it. I am sending half the English officers off today and the remainder will go with me when I can get off with the rest of the troops. If I can raise 20 boats I may get away; if not I must wait for the boats to come back . . . .

(Friday) . . . . at last started off the last boat with the last of the men . . . . and three of my English staff. These officers themselves are as helpless as babies. They have never been on the Staff, and want everything done for them. The steamers with them couldn't start last evening because they had not embarked their horses while it was light. I had consequently to put off the departure until daybreak this morning. An hour after daybreak I rode down expecting to find all embarked and ready to start. I found nothing done. I rode to the officers' house and found them not up even. They then lost their horses ! I and couldn't find them for hours - they had sent them somewhere and the grooms didn't understand them and took them heaven knows where. It is now 11 o'clock and Col. Colborne is not to be found. He is C.O. I have sent the other officers on board with



orders to sail. An Egyptian staff officer had found and embarked their horses. Now you see the kind of worry I am put to. I have reported Giegler Pasha to Cairo for giving me too little transport and allowing all the other boats to slip away. I only hope the rebels won't attack these 3000 Egyptian troops before I can get down, for what with their own want of pluck and such an old fool as Colborne in command they are likely enough to go to grief. I have told Colborne tho', he is not to interfere but to leave the command of the troops to a Native officer I have named. I hope he'll do so and I trust he appreciates this mark of my confidence (!)

I have nothing but worry from morning to night. De Coetlogon is of no assistance to me and today I had to walk into him for being rude and insubordinate. Col. Farquhar is the most active and intelligent I think. I got him promoted to Lt. Col. the day before yesterday by telegram from Cairo.

(Saturday, March 31st) I have been fighting Ala al-Din Pasha and threatening all kinds of reports to the Khedive if I don't get boats. The result is [that] after sending steamers up the river 19 were found hiding away and seized (they would come willingly if they were only paid properly - but they are looted by every man through whose hands the money passes - Govern't. pays but the boatmen don't get half). After getting the boats I thought I had . . . . everything and could be off, when I am told that they have provided absolutely no biscuit for the soldiers and I must wait until some can be got up from Berber (10 days ! ! ). Had they told me this before (I say), I would have kept back a Battalion of Egyptian regulars and sent on the men who I have kept back who are 900 Bashi Bazooks and the best fighting men I have - but they tell me at the last moment. I would have undertaken the campaign with a Battalion less of Egyptian troops and not cared, but I can't spare the Bashi Bazooks. I tell Ala al-Din Pasha that I suppose he is going to

feed them while they are waiting for the biscuit, and Consequently he must have grain and the grain must be made up at once into bread and given to us for the passage to Kava, where we will use the other troops' biscuit until he can forward us the supply wh. comes from Berber. I have not heard what he says to this. I cannot make out what they are after putting all these obstacles in my way. It seems they don't want me to go on, and meanwhile the rebels are gaining strength. I can't stop the passage of the river from the Kordofan side to the Senaar side while I am here, and consequently the Mahdi may reinforce the rebels as much as he can. Everyone is looking to me to strike a blow, and I am hampered and tied by the very servants of the Government who should assist in every way. I expect a question will be asked soon, if it has not already, in the House of Commons - who I am and what I am doing - and I daresay I shall come in for abuse. However the Govt. will consult Lord Dufferin and I have gained his complete confidence.

By the way I send you a copy of my letter which was presented to the Khedive when I was appointed to come up here. I could not enter into a contract, but the Khedive's acceptance of my letter is enough to guarantee that what I asked in it will be granted. You must keep it, as in the event of anything happening to me you would be entitled to a year's pay [of] £1,200 from the Egyptian Govern.

(1.30 p.m) I just returned from an interview with Ala al-Din Pasha. I think I shall get off in two days now. The Mahdi has sent all the Government officials away from Obeid and distributed them amongst the tribes in the hills. He has sworn all the soldiers who surrendered (7,000) on the Koran to be faithful to him, and has returned their arms. (But I don't think they'll remain faithful to him when my army appears ! )

The powerful Baggara tribe have quite left the Mahdi and have constant fights with his followers - this news is confirmed by a fugitive from Obeid who came in today. I find they have some Gatling guns here in very good order but they have mixed up

the ammunition with Remington rifle ammn., and as the one is a little larger than the other both Gatling guns and rifles are not to be depended upon: the cartridges stick in the rifles and prevent them closing often, and they tumble out of the Gatlings. I am going to have some ammn. sorted. I can only do a little as it would be too long a job to sort one million of rounds. I want if possible to mount a Gatling on each of the two steamers I use to patrol the White Nile and so keep my Nordenfeldts.

The climate here is awfully hot now - it is getting much hotter every day. My officers, some of them, look like drowned rats. Poor Martin . . . is very seedy I'm afraid. I have sent him off with the first batch. I thought the change would do him good. I still am well, I am thankful to say. We must all be very careful of drinking the White Nile water: it is poisonous now. I shall only drink from little wells I shall have dug on the banks.

Khartoum, April 3rd, 1883.

I must write you my last letter before I leave Khartoum, altho' I am so [busy] I can't find a moment to myself. After breakfast I pack up and am off up the Nile to Dueim, 20 hours distant, where a large force of rebels are reported to be assembled with the intention of attacking that place. Some of the troops I sent away in advance will have arrived there and reinforced the place, so I hope they have had no reverse. The officer [in charge] sent to me begging for assistance as the enemy were in large force and he had only 600 men in garrison. If anything takes place you will have heard about it long before you get this letter . . . . I suppose now . . . . [it] shall not be long before I discover what the fighting qualities are of the troops I have. One thing I know, wh. is that one can only fight them in square, wh. is complete ruin to all tactics. It is just like a bear fighting with a log tied to his leg. Since sitting down to write this, I have had in my room Ala al-Din Pasha, Suleiman Pasha, Hamdin Bey, Wahabi Bey, the Austrian officer, the Engineer officers, Col. Farquhar, etc., etc . . . .

This movement of the rebels on Dueim may upset the whole of my programme. If they are the force wh. I expected to meet at Goz Abu Guma and Gebelain I shall have to beat them in Kordofan instead of in Senaar, and my plan of campaign is entirely altered . . . . I am sorry to say Walker is very seedy - he vomits after all he eats - and I'm afraid Martin is very bad too, but these fellows won't take ordinary care of themselves. One fact (if it is true) about these rebels at Dueim is that they have, according to the report of the officer coming there, a battery of guns, and rockets, and are armed with rifles (Remington). So since the capture of Obeid and its military stores they are improving in the art of war - before they trusted mostly to swords and spears.(38) There was a fight at Dueim with them six months ago and they lost 3,000 out of 4,000 men - they must be very fond of fighting to go in again at the same place.

Kaua, on the Nile, April 9th, 1883

I arrived here four days ago - having stopped at Dueim and reinforced the place with 800 men. It had not been attacked and, altho' the enemy were said to be within 15 miles I don't think they will make a very serious attack now. I did not go and look them up as I am reserving them until after we have polished off the rebel force at Gebelein - who will escape if they can over the river, and then Senaar will be cleared out, and I can commence operations on the Kordofan Bank. What escape from us will join those opposite Dueim.

I am quite worn out with the trouble . . . . these cursed Egyptian officers and officials give me. I would never have come here had I a notion of what was before me. For instance, I made it a special point that the troops should all be paid up their arrears of pay before I took them into action. The Governor General assured me that he had sent with me sufficient money to pay all the men to the uttermost farthing - and 20,000 dollars for a Military Chest for expenses. I find now that the money was not nearly sufficient - the troops at Kaua are still left 4 to 6 months in arrears, the troops at Wad al-Zaki have received no money at all and came to me in a body. The Military Chest

instead of 20,000 dollars contains 2,000, wh. I may spend in a couple of days for dangerous or important services. I was going back to Khartoum today myself to beard the Governor - but I found I daren't leave as I couldn't trust those I leave behind. So I am sending a steamer with Capt. de Coetlogon back about it. I am also sending Major Martin and Capt. Walker who are very ill. They will be no good and will not come back I fancy. The heat is over 100° now. I don't know what it will go up to. I am well thank God - I ride every morning a good gallop into the country - 5 or 6 of us well armed. It is the only pleasure I have. I am sorry for de Coetlogon as he is a bad rider, and we gallop hard. Interview with Suleiman Pasha - but it is gone now.

Just imagine, I left an A.D.C. at Khartoum and 10 horses . . . with orders to come on at once with the steamer 'Ismailia', wh. arrived the day after we left Khartoum (it met and passed us) and the English mail also was to come in it, and several telegrams I expected. Now what do you think they have done at Khartoum - instead of sending the steamer at once as I ordered, they have kept it and there it is now. They say it wants repair. It was three weeks at Khartoum doing nothing and they never did anything to it there. Now they pretend to discover a leak or hole or something - it is all humbug, a piece with everything Egyptian. I am kept without my English letters tho' - but I can't write about these things, it makes me quite sick. Having no cavalry for reconnoitring, I, with the greatest trouble, got together 110 ponies and sent them off with Bashi Bazook riders to be here in time for me. I found they haven't arrived, tho' so urgently required, and at last I discover that Suleiman Pasha, the Egyptian General, had seen them on the march, from the steamer on the river, and had sent and ordered them back. This is the sort of thing I have to stand. Never mind - I could fill pages of it.



Kaua on the Nile (last garrison of Egyptian troops before the  
ford at Goz Abu Guma), April 11th 1883.

I returned yesterday at 5 p.m. from a reconnaissance towards the position held by the rebels, and I was delighted to find that a steamer had come in, the 'Ismailia' . . . . I started at 6 a.m. in a steamer with 50 Bashi Bazooks and two Nordenfeldt Guns; also one mountain gun for shells at the stern of the boat. We had received information that the enemy had come down close to Kaua and were on both banks of the river, also that they were in large numbers at Goz Abu Guma. After we had gone up the river about an hour we were fired at from the west bank. The bullets fell short by about 20 yards and as one could not see who fired I would not allow the men to reply. But after a little time we got it hotter and fired in return. Brody knocked one Arab off his camel with the Nordenfeldt gun. I don't know how many more were killed. At all events we went through the whole day without a mishap of any kind to ourselves. They had made very good entrenchments at two places on the bank - we gave them some shells in these and cleared them out. They had a herd of cattle - we fired a few rounds from the Nordenfeldts into it, and knocked over 8 or 10. The Bashi Bazooks landed afterwards and brought back a boat load of beef. I didn't like firing at the poor beasts, but beef was not to be refused the Bashi Bazooks, and so we took some. We got back at 5 p.m. but to my intense disgust I had not reached the strong position of the enemy and so must make another reconnaissance, as I know nothing of their strength etc. Altho' I had made particular enquiries about fuel and had been assured there was ample, the Capt. sent me word that unless I turned back at once we should not have enough to return. And I was within 12 miles of the place, having gone 30 miles up the river. Everything is the same, they thrash me in every way, [and] I cannot get things done. I have just now (7 a.m.) returned from a route marching parade - the troops out as they will be when they take the field. They are a rabble and nothing else . . . You will read in the paper of Abd al-Qadir's beating the rebels and killing thousands. I'm afraid there is a good deal of lying about these reports. He is relieved now and I have ordered

Hussein Pasha who takes his place on the Blue Nile to cooperate with me.

Kaua - on the White Nile, Sunday, April 15th, 1883.

I am devoting Sunday morning 6.30 a.m. to writing a letter to you. At 7.30 I have Service so I have not gone out riding this morning. The thermometer at this early hour is 84°. It registered 104° yesterday. I wonder what it will go up to. I am starting on an expedition tomorrow . . . . I only hope de Coetlogon will return from Khartoum today with the pay for the troops or I shall not get off tomorrow. I must wait for him to bring this money . . . . I will not undertake a campaign in Kordofan after this is over unless things are very different. I told you in my last that Martin and Walker had gone back to Khartoum ill - two of my Egyptian A.D.C.s are ill now. The rest of us are well thank God . . . . but all look more or less washed out.

I have remained living on this little steamer, 'El Fasher', with 4 of the staff. It is rather crowded but there is a certain amount of protection from the sun. It is quite impossible to live in the Egyptian tents in this climate. Yesterday we were surprised at a bullet being fired at us and striking the funnel. It came from a boat, and turned out to be an accident caused by a careless Bashi Bazook. I gave him a jobation about more care in future and let him go. Yesterday they brought a camel down to the bank by my boat [and] cut its throat and cut it up and divided it in no time. It had broken its leg. All the filth goes into the river - it is a perfect sewer here and the men drink in the midst of the most filthy muck. I cannot prevent this. The officers don't care about it more than the men. Everything that can contaminate the water goes in all round and the skins for drinking water are filled in the very middle of it. I'm afraid of a serious outbreak of illness amongst the troops. I keep up my pluck and spirits as well as I can but I must say at times I feel quite disheartened - which you will not wonder at when you have read my letter to Baker. However there is nothing to be done but to carry it through whatever the difficulties. It

must be got through as well as is possible, but it is different to what I expected, altho' I was prepared for a great deal . . . I have up to this managed to drink Blue Nile water. I brought several tanks full and have more coming down in the steamer from Khartoum. . . .

Abu Zed,(39) April 22nd, 1883.

This place is the ford on the Nile which I have been so long anxious to reach . . . . I came here with two steamers, and 7 boats in tow, bringing 340 Turkish Bashi Bazooks, about 100 regular Egyptian soldiers, two Nordenfeldt guns, [and] 1 mountain gun. By land march this morning from Kava [come] 4,400 regular Egyptian Infantry, 310 Bashi Bazooks. 4 mountain guns, 3 rockets, 4 Nordenfeldt guns, [and] 110 Camel Corps (for scouting). They will be 5 days on the march. As the enemy get all information of our movements and this place is the only ford by wh. they can cross the river, I came on ahead to take possession. I had heard the enemy held it, and expected to have a fight for it, but I found only a hundred or so of men and dispersed them with a few shells and three rounds from the Nordenfeldts. They went off apparently at once, but some few must have remained for they fired on our boats at night. I have drawn up my boats across the ford, wh. is perhaps half a mile in length and a mile broad. I broke the axle of the mountain gun in firing yesterday, so have to make a new one - it will be ready this morning.

I think I shall steam on to Gebelein tomorrow morning to reconnoitre before the army on the land arrives. It is five hours from here (Gebelein). I wish I had gone with the land force now - since the enemy have not held the ford - not that they will have any fighting, but I should have liked to see how they carry out my order for the line of march. They themselves have no idea at all of what they should do. I drew out rules for the General to observe as regards scouting, picquets, etc., etc. I had the greatest difficulty in persuading him that he could not march in square ( ! ), which he wanted to do, the front face being a line 200 yards long. He couldn't go half a mile without having the formation broken up. I divided the English Staff as

follows. With me: Col. Farquhar, Capt. Massey, Capt. Evans (my Interpreter - I have had him made a Capt.), Dr. Rosenberg. With the land force: Col. Colborne, Col. de Coetlogon, Capt. Mattiaga (an Austrian), Mr. Marcopoli (40) (Interpreter) [and] Mr. Morris, - a mechanic for the Nordenfeldts. I told you Major Martin and Capt. Walker had been sent back ill. I saw them at Khartoum. They are both very bad - Martin a wreck (poor Giant) . . . [and] Walker very weak. They were bent upon getting to Cairo, to . . . hospital, and I had to give in about them going across the desert now. I don't see how they are able to stand it, but I saw it would be the death to them to keep them at Khartoum in their present longing to leave it. So I have sent orders to the Governor of Berber to make the best possible arrangements for their going to Souakin . . . . My staff is much reduced as I had sent Major W[ ] with Hussein Pasha on the Blue Nile. Abd al-Qadir has left the force, having taken it so far south that it is impossible for it to co-operate with me, and has returned to Khartoum en route to Cairo. He is an able man and a good soldier I believe, but from what Baron Korff (41) let out to me at Khartoum he has been filling his pockets and those of his Secretary (a Greek Dr.) (42) at the expense of the people (Robbery systematized) . . . . I sent from Dueim a proclamation into the enemy's camp. I enclose a paper which came back in return. It is a curiosity. It is addressed to the officer of native troops Commg. at Dueim, Said Bey by name. (43) He was attacked some time ago by the rebels and killed 3000 of them. I don't think he'll go over to them now . . . .

April 26th. I am writing this to you from the banks of the Nile as I have joined the land force, and am now sitting in the middle of a square of men drawn up four deep on all sides waiting for the attack of the enemy, but I will tell you all about it. I was just starting for Gebelein when I last wrote. Well, on giving up the river I got information that most of the enemy had left Gebelein and had started 4 days before on the march to meet the Turks (as they call the Egyptian Army). Having found out that this information was reliable, I steamed back at once [and] got to the ford at Abu Zed at 6 p.m. [I] saw Yahia Bey, the Albanian Colonel of Bashi Bazooks to hold the ford, and, against

the wish of the Nile pilot of the boat who threatened destruction, steamed on through the night down stream in hopes of falling in with the Army. I calculated I should by going on at once catch them encamped a little off the river just before they entered the wooded country by Abba (island). If they had passed this point I should not be able to find them and they would probably meet the Abba forces unexpectedly and without my being with them. I am glad to say everything turned out exactly as I anticipated. I caught them at the very spot and just at daybreak when they were preparing to march. Meanwhile they had taken a spy and had heard of the rebels being near. They, the rebels, were some 10 miles off - about 8000 strong with 300 cavalry - only a few armed with Remington rifles (the spy said about 160; an odd number for him to name, [since] as these Arabs have no idea of number it seems as if he had been drawing on his imagination or been primed). The rebels are near the very place I had fixed upon for our first fight in the plan I sent . . . some time ago - viz. at Goz Abu Guma. I had intended you will remember to attack them by river and land and give at them crossing the ford wh. was marked on the map as being there, but wh. I found in reality is quite 10 miles further up river (so much for the accuracy of their surveys ! ) and my plan is of course knocked on the head. Well, to continue my story, on my way down from Gebelein to Abu Zed I found large heaps of ambatch wood ready cut and piled by the rebels to make rafts to cross the river to the Kordofan side. Altho' in such a hurry to get down to the other force, I was determined to sell them a bargain and stopped to burn their heaps. I destroyed 70 (?). If we lick them they'll rush for these ambatch heaps, find them destroyed, and be puzzled to get across the river in front of Yahia Bey . .

Immediately on getting sight of the Army when I arrived her at daylight I sent Capt. (I had written so far when Brody rushed in to me saying 'I think they're on us Sir' - and out as fast as he came - there was an alarm and the troops turned out and are standing to their arms now in square. I can see no one and have returned to go on with this letter - some camel men have come in as fast as they can and I shall hear soon their news) Massey with a message to Suleiman Pasha that I had arrived with news and that



he was to halt instead of marching, to give me time to join him, and to send my horses and some camels to the river. Soon after Col. de Coetlogon came down, and on board the Steamer. He told me he never was so glad to see anyone, as Suleiman Pasha had not carried out any of my instructions for the march or for picquet duty, and everything in the camp was in confusion. I soon got into camp and then we got news from a deserter from the enemy that they were coming on at once to attack us. So as we are in a good position and further on it is very woody and bad, we await their attack here. They are commanded by a [?] of the Mahdi who has given them his blessing and perfect freedom from injury by lead or steel.

Goz Abu Guma, April 30th 1883.

You will have read in the papers . . . . about the fight I had on the 29th (my birthday) (44) . . . . I never saw such pluck as these men have - they come straight on at a run and stop for nothing. I was quite sorry to have to kill them. They were only partly armed with rifles - most of them had only spears and long swords, both as sharp as razors. If they once reach the front rank the men are cut down at once so we have to keep them off. Their pluck or fanaticism which ever it was could only cause the greatest admiration. They circled round us out of range and then came down on all sides at a quick run firing (I'm glad to say wildly) and brandishing their swords and spears. All of a sudden when they got within a decent range they began to topple over like nine pins - but nothing disconcerted they still came on, on, until they got right up to the square, cavalry and infantry, then they fell . . . . they wavered, fell back, and bolted, excepting some who came on boldly, sometimes only single men, and refusing to throw away their arms were shot down. I have seen the Ghazies [sic] in India charge, but never such wonderful pluck. Some prisoners we have taken said the Mahdi and their priests had sworn to them our bullets would turn into water. They had deceived them; but they had found it out too late.

I leave tomorrow in a steamer with some troops towed behind to cut their retreat off at Gebelein - I expect I shall catch

them crossing the river - only 4,000 attacked us, but there are very many more at Gebelein. When the land force comes up I shall again join it, leaving the river force in somebody else's command. We killed about 500 and wounded very many - they are all over the country, poor devils. The Egyptian soldiers were much steadier than I expected but I don't know that they will be so steady when we cross to the Kordofan side, where we shall meet many more rifles, and guns (cannon). The Egyptian General (45) is a fossil and does his best to make a hash of everything: I shall get him removed or go myself. I can't go on like this.

I am so glad we have had this victory, for they were getting very anxious in Cairo. I had another telegram from Lord Dufferin today (dated 19th). He is very anxious, and stands by me like a brick. This will be a great relief to him. We fought 4000 men, but two tribes of Arabs stood off at a distance looking on to see how the fight went before coming in to it. When they saw the havoc we were inflicting on these religious fanatics, they retired. I shall not wonder if they came in and declared for us. I hope they may. If I had only had some cavalry I could have been able to inflict tremendous loss. Seven Chiefs were killed.

... I hope next week to cross into Kordofan, march up the bank beating them all along and at last to [march] 17 miles into the interior where a large force is said to be. I hope my Egyptians will stand - this easy victory is a great thing for them - but they did shoot badly. Brody amused me. He wanted me to dismount from my horse, saying 'What's the use Sir of your risking your life more than necessary for these people' - but I told him I couldn't see well if I dismounted, at wh. he got angry. But then the excitement became so great he let me alone. He told me afterwards I was nearly killed by a rocket but I believe he was laying in stock for a future occasion. He gave me a dagger he took off a dead man, for a birthday present. I have also a beautiful spear, a shield, and a banner - also a necklace of beads taken off the neck of one of the Chief Dervishes, who rode right up to the front rank and was shot down with his horse. 'Vive la guerre' they say, but it is sickening to kill so many in such a one-sided affair, for we only lost 7, and 5 the day before, when they lost shoals. The heat has been something awful

and the worry I have had to keep Suleiman Pasha from making a born idiot of himself and losing the Army has been wearing in the extreme . . . . I must have the direction of everything in my own hands with no Egyptian General to fight against, or I won't carry on, and so I have telegraphed to Cairo. I wonder what they'll think of it.

I suppose they'll give me some wonderful decoration for this business, but the way in wh. decorations have been won lately for nothing takes away the value in my eyes. I am truly thankful to say I am well, but many of my staff are washed out, Martin and Walker [have] gone away ill and every Egyptian staff officer - 6 in number, [is] gone from me. I haven't one left.

Island of Abba (birthplace [sic] of the Mahdi), Whit Monday [14 May 1883]

I have just sent a party of Bashi Bazooks under an officer to burn the village (empty of inhabitants) of Abba, and root up the place altogether. It is now in flames, and as I am anchored and the steamer isn't shaking I take the opportunity of writing. I have just finished a telegram to Lord Dufferin telling him that 10 Chiefs have submitted to me during the last few days. I sent to them with great difficulty, they have so little faith in the Egyptians. I told them in my letter I was an English officer, and I met them alone on the Kordofan bank, leaving our army on the other side [of] the river. I have forgiven all and restored confidence in this part of the country. The movement is spreading and I expect a great number will come in. The Mahdi is getting uncomfortable I think, for I get reports that he is marching to attack Dueim and then going to Khartoum. I am hastening to Dueim and get there tomorrow with 1600 men I have brought with me. The rest of the Army follow. I shall send off my letters and telegrams from Kaua, where I go first . . . .

I have telegraphed to Sartorius to see about my pay. I was disgusted to hear from the Bank at Cairo that up to 3rd April the Govt. had not paid in a farthing - but Sartorius was to blame for he promised to see it was done . . . . I shall be very glad

when this campaign is over, for it is a beastly country. I have so much trouble too. I have telegraphed to Baker Pasha that unless I am put by the Khedive in undivided and indisputable command of the whole army in the Soudan I will not be responsible. I must be made of superior rank to these Egyptian Generals - being of the same rank they are obstructive and often oppose my orders. If the Khedive does not do this I must resign. It is impossible for me to carry on another campaign under the same conditions as these.

Dueim, May 20th 1883.

[ . . . . . ]

21st May. 7 a.m. . . . . This place stinks dreadfully. The men have been allowed for 10 months to defile the banks of the river in all manner of ways (which I have now stopped) and opposite to where we are anchored some thousand corpses were buried some months ago after the fight here - I believe they smell still.

Suleiman Pasha ought to come down today with the remainder of the Army. I shall then settle what is to be done. I expect we shall be back in Khartoum in ten days; for as soon as the rebels heard of my coming in this direction they broke up their force at Shatt (15 miles off) and dispersed. Also at Shag [ ? ] where Ahmed Makashfi was (the brother of the Chief sent to fight us by the Mahdi and whom we killed). (46) He has gone to the Mahdi - wherever he is - wh. is what I cannot find out. Reports the most contradictory are brought in. I came down here especially to meet the great Chiefs Asakir and Manna. (47) Asakir had received my letter offering him pardon, and Manna had quarrelled with the Mahdi and was to come in with Asakir. On arrival here I got the news that Manna and the Mahdi had had a fight - some killed on both sides and Manna taken prisoner.

Another man who came in from Obeid told me the Mahdi was going at once to Gebel Gedir (48) (far south) where he had sent his property and where his family were. Again Ala al-Din Pasha writes to me from Khartoum that he has received information that the Mahdi is marching to Abu Zeit [sic] to cut me off from communication with Khartoum. This I know must be false, for there is no water on the road. A Coptic clerk who has come in tells me the Mahdi has taken the regular soldiers captured at Obeid as prisoners and gone to Gebel Gedir, as he heard I was advancing on him from here and another force from Darfur. He had left all the other prisoners to go where they liked, including the priests and sisters, but more did not come in as they would die from want of water on the road. The Mahdi is no fool and must know I couldn't take 6000 men to Obeid now, for want of water. Asakir and Manna have not sent to me yet. So you see the state of uncertainty I am in. I am going to meet a large number of petty rebel chiefs tomorrow some 20 miles off, on the Senaar side of the river, forgive them their sins, and take them into favour again. I am sending my divan tent to be pitched and shall make a ceremony of it.

I think I shall march a Battalion from Kava (where it will cross to the West bank) to Shag, and thence to Shatt, and another Battalion from here (Dueim) to Shatt. After which, if I get no news of the Mahdi I shall take the bulk of the Army back to Khartoum, leaving garrisons at Dueim and Kava, and shall continue to patrol both White and Blue Niles with armed steamers . . . . I have come to the conclusion that they are paying me very badly for this work . . . . Ala al-Din Pasha the Governor, who really has little if any more authority and responsibility than I have, draws £3,500 a year. I agreed for £1,200 so must abide by it, but had I known the amount of work and anxiety and also what other men were paid I would have hinted that I considered myself cheap at the price . . . . If this Mahdi gets up into the hills or mountains I shall never be able to catch him - he might remain there for years. Don't tell the Exeter Hall (49) people, but if he does get away South I shall try to buy his head. It will be the only way. I wish I had more time and had arranged to correspond with a paper, for there are two officers on my Staff



who make £700 and £480 a year by writing for a paper. Sartorius suggested I should write for the Bombay Times and said he would write to them about it. I did write one letter, but I found Sartorius sent them all my telegrams himself, and so pockets the proceeds, and my letters would be stale news . . . . The Daily News pays £700 a year to a man here who can't write a page of sense; (50) I give him all information and draft his telegram to prevent mistakes occurring.

I wonder what they will do with me if I ever get back to Cairo, which I expect to do. I think it possible I shall be made a Lt. General before [the] next campaign, in wh. case there would be no appointment in the Gendarmerie up to my rank. Sir Evelyn Wood's term will be up in the new Egyptian Army, perhaps I shall succeed to the command !! If I settle the country and the Mahdi, Gladstone will owe me a good turn, Granville (51) ditto, to say nothing of the Khedive - so I ought to get something from somebody . . . . I have just heard of a chief lying badly wounded 3 hours from here unable to move since the battle - he is in a village with about a hundred men - I haven't any cavalry to send out and capture him.

Khartoum, June 2nd. [Letter headed only 'Public', without salutation].

We have had a dreadful night - not a breath of air and all nature as silent as the tomb. It seemed as if some terrible calamity was pending over the world and everything with life holding its breath in expectation. I told you I had telegraphed to Cairo that unless Suleiman Pasha was placed more decidedly under my orders . . . . I would not undertake the responsibility of another campaign, as he was obstructive to a degree. Sir Edwd. Malet telegraphs to me that he has seen Chief Pasha, (52) the prime minister, on the subject, who says that 'Orders' had been sent by him to Suleiman Pasha that no military movements are to be made without my advice and consent, and consequently I was virtually Commander in Chief; that if he heard from me that orders were disobeyed he would repeat them; that he did not put me in publicly as Commander in Chief because the rebellion here

was a religious movement, and if a Christian was publicly appointed to the command of the Army sent to put it down, it would probably be fanning the fanaticism'. I have replied that I fully understand the reasons and that all I want is that Suleiman Pasha shall be given to understand that my orders are to be obeyed without delay, dispute, or hesitation, and that his passive obstruction is to cease.

And now what do you think I hear? Last night the Governor General's Secretary came to me and told me that Ala al-Din Pasha had just received telegrams from Cherif Pasha . . . and the Khedive, ordering him to go himself far down [sic] the Blue Nile to purchase 5,000 camels for the next campaign, and that Suleiman Pasha ! was to be put in to act for him here during his absence. So, as he cannot be absent less than two months, by wh. time I expected to start, for the whole of this time the same trouble, difficulty, obstruction etc. is to be repeated, from which we suffered before we started for the Senaar campaign. I pointed out then the Chaos which resulted from the Governor Gen'l's. (Abd al-Qadir's) absence from Khartoum, and in consequence got Ala al-Din put in. Now, at a time when far larger preparations have to be made for a more important campaign, they are going to repeat the mistake; send away the Governor General and leave a man here who will have fine opportunity of being as obstructive as he likes, and who of course will take no action in any matter of importance without referring to the 'pucka' Governor General, who will be hundreds of miles away. All our former trouble will be repeated, in a greater degree. Now, I have got today to set to work with the telegraph and in cypher, through Malet, fight all the authorities, Khedive, Prime Minister and all, and get this folly stopped. Lord Dufferin's departure to Constantinople is a great blow to me. Malet doesn't carry the weight he did. . . .

As regards this coming campaign there are innumerable reasons why the Gov. Gl. should remain at Khartoum. Forage for cavalry and artillery horses has not been arranged for, the country is bare, and they consume 20,000 lbs. a day. The system for passing on supplies for the Army has not been fixed and every ounce of food will have to come from here. I ought to have the

responsible head of the administration here, to arrange these matters with, instead of an acting man who will not take responsibility and who I have already found out to be an obstructive old fossil. As it is, there are questions which I should like to represent personally at Cairo if I could only get there and back quicker. To begin with, we have the large and powerful tribe of Kabbabish Arabs occupying the country we must march through to Obeid. They are at present neutral. They are afraid to side with the Government, as the Mahdi is still strong and occupies their country. At the same time they fear the Government. They will side with whichever side appears the strongest on the opening of the campaign. (53) It is impracticable to take with the Army and encumber its movements with the transport required for provisions for several months. With Egyptian troops you cannot have an ordinary baggage guard and allow it to follow the main body. All transport animals have to move in the centre of the Army and to be inside the square when the Army is engaged - no other arrangement does for Egyptian troops. If there were an ordinary baggage guard and the baggage were attacked, the troops would run away, be cut up, and all the convoy looted. Now with 5000 men it is impossible that I can form a square sufficiently large to contain 5,000 camels, to say nothing of horses, mules, etc., etc., guns (Nordenfeldts), and what not, quite impossible. If so, then depots for provisions must be formed on the line of route (210 miles). Good, but to form these depots and garrison them with sufficient strength in a neutral, and possibly hostile country, at least 3000 men would be required, but this would only leave 3000 to bring into action, quite insufficient. So more troops are required. There are none. None can be taken from the column distributed at Sensar and on the Blue Nile, and the Government apparently cannot send me a man from the Abyssinian frontier. I would propose instead of buying 5,000 camels at a cost of \$ [majidi] 225,000 (and possibly not to be obtained at all), to communicate with the Chief of the Kabbabish. They own camels in hundreds of thousands - they are the carriers of the country. For two years this war has put a stop to their employment and profit, [and] they would welcome an inflow of money. [I would] point out to their Chief the discredit the Mahdi has fallen into, his present weakness

compared to his former strength, [and] the recent victories gained over the rebels, and offer him a present of \$20,000 for himself and \$80,000 as hire for camels from his tribe if they will throw in their lot with us. If this were done in a judicious manner I believe we might get the Kabbabish on our side. There would, then, be no difficulty for transport: depots might be formed with small garrisons, and supplies pushed up as required, and the Government would save \$125,000. Besides, the Kabbabish as our allies would be an important addition to our fighting strength. I am telegraphing to Sir Evelyn Wood telling him about the position. He is a soldier and will understand. There are only two courses open: 1st, to send me 3000 more men at least, or 2nd, to gain over the Kabbabish tribe. To expect me to march my force 220 miles into the interior, through a semi-hostile tribe, outnumbering me by tens of thousands, and to take with me supplies for months and keeping open lines of communication [and] forming no depots, is to expect military movement which is contrary to all military rules, and with my small force impracticable. I shall not attempt it.

1230 p.m. I have just had a long consultation with the Governor Genl. It appears that there is no chance of getting over the Kabbabish Chief until we are actually on the way through his tribe towards Obeid. He has written in to say that he begs we won't write to him again or send any men to him, as he fears if the Mahdi hears of it he will attack him. So all I can do now is to send word to Cairo that I must have 4000 more men. Unless they send Evelyn Wood's new Army, I don't see how they are to help me. The monthly expenditure on the troops in the Soudan is £40,000 and no revenue coming in, and the Treasury at Cairo is bankrupt. This of course is why Lord Dufferin recommends the retention now of Senaar and both rivers, and the abandonment of Kordofan and Darfur for the present, until a good administration has been established in lower Egypt and finances are in better condition . . . . Our stores have come from Cairo and amongst them some Champagne - just imagine ! We had some for dinner . . . . Ala al-Din Pasha invited us to dinner the day we arrived here and we had a band (such a band), but to our astonishment it played the first thing 'God Save the Queen' - a little delicate

attention and compliment on Ala al-Din Pasha's part . . . . .  
they had mugged up 'God Save the Queen' and a selection from  
'Aida' ! !

Khartoum, June 5th 1883.

I am, as I told you in my last, settled down for two months at least. I'm afraid I shan't have a nice time of it, for the bad season is commencing when there is a damp muggy heat and the rain brings out the odours of the town. However I intend as soon as the river rises sufficiently to go up the Blue Nile and visit Senaar and the other stations. I shall also make one or two more trips up the White Nile. I have already been up and down so many hundred miles of the latter river that I am almost qualified for a pilot. I have sent my steamer, the 'Bordein', wh. is the one I have taken for my private use, to be put into repair: the deck over the cabin leaked and the engines require something done to them. She will be ready in about ten days. I think I shall frequently go up the two rivers, between mail days, and see what is going on. I carry two Nordenfeldt guns, one mountain gun (for shells), and twenty or thirty men of the Company I have attached to me as a guard. I have no exercise tho' when on board, which is a great drawback, but even here in Khartoum there is little excuse to be fat . . . .

I have sent the following telegram to Cairo: I don't know what they will do, for I don't see whence they are to produce the men I must have. (If they would only, I mean the English and Indian Governments, let me have a small Brigade from India.) I telegraphed also to Sir Evelyn Wood asking him to go to Malet to see this telegram, and I telegraphed to the Minister for War that Sir Evelyn W. would bring the telegram to him.

Telegram to Sir Edward Malet - Cairo:

'Khartoum June 3rd/83 -

'Altho the Mahdi has lost influence, he has no doubt a considerable number of men, and after the season for cultivation of fields has passed he may be joined by



many more. He has a very large sum of money. The force we have is not nearly sufficient to undertake the Kordofan campaign. Every ounce of food must be taken from here. We march through a hostile country inhabited by powerful tribes. The line of communication must be kept open and depots must be formed, which must be sufficiently garrisoned. Each convoy will require escort, [and] our available strength will be under 6,000. Of these, many will be sick after the fever season. I cannot withdraw a man from the Blue Nile stations. Khartoum is full of rebels and a sufficient garrison must be left there.

The garrisons on [the] White Nile will be reduced as much as possible. I shall have available for the campaign about 5,000 Infantry. Of these, at least 2,000 will be necessary on the line of communication, thus leaving only 3000 for the attacking force. I consider this number quite inadequate. It should be 10,000 men. What number of men will it be possible for the Government to send me in augmentation?

"When we consider that a defeat would mean not only the loss of Darfur and Kordofan but also Senaar and possibly Khartoum, no risk, I think, should be run.

The estimate of cost of Field Force for the next six months shall be forwarded. It amounts to about £120,000, without transport. Will Sir E. Wood do me the favour of submitting this telegram to His Exy. the Minister of War' -

I hear that if I release the prisoners now with the Mahdi I am to have the order of Maria Theresa from the Austrian Government, which is one of the highest orders they can confer.

(8 p.m.) We have just had a Council: Ala al-Din Pasha, Suleiman Pasha, 3 Colonels of the Egyptian troops, and I took Col. Farquhar with me. It is decided that we must telegraph for

5,000 more men to be here within two months. They can only be raised by dragging from their houses and the cultivation of their fields, wh. is just commencing, men of the old army discharged after Tel al Kebir, and dismissed officers. All these will be sent up to the Soudan in chains - as were the men of the Army I now have . . . . What can one expect from such men? They have not an atom of spirit, pluck, or soldierly feeling. It is 100 to 1 they bolt. I am going to point this out to Sir Evelyn Wood and ask him not to leave me in such a fix, but to send me 4 Battalions of his new Army and I will be content. I don't know whether it can be managed. I have just had a report that 400 Camels, each carrying 2 men (800) well armed, are marching towards . . . . the Nile an hour and a half by steamer from here in the Berber direction, commanded by a brother of Sheik Nour of the Kabbabish tribe. This is serious if true. I have dispatched a steamer for information.

(7th June 8 a.m.) I have just had a parade of the Krupp Battery. I find them under-manned and under-horsed: 51 men, drivers and gunners, deserted since leaving Cairo, altho' in irons at the time, and there were only 6 mules to each gun instead of 8. However I have enough mules to put in the extra 2, and I must take some men from the Infantry and drill them as gunners.

Saturday 9th June . . . . I shall be very glad when it is all over and I can get beack to civilization [sic] and an appointment, I hope. The report of the 400 camels with 800 men marching on Kererrie (54) turns out a humbug . . . . I have been this morning to inspect the fort I ordered to be built at Omdurman before I left for Senaar, and I am very pleased with it. It would do credit to any nation, and I shall make a special report favourable to the Colonel who superintended the works. The Camp too out there is now clean and regularly pitched, and the soldiers look well and happier than when I first came. They gave me three cheers when I was leaving the camp. I received a letter from Fashoda asking for reinforcements as the garrison was besieged, and no one brought provisions and they want to go out

and attack the rebels. I think I shall go there myself and look into the matter, but I don't like to leave Khartoum until I get a reply from Wood and hear what they are going to do about sending me some troops. Fashoda is about 5 days from here by steamer. I hardly like to be away from Khartoum for 10 days - so this is the fix I am in, and of my staff I really have no one but Col. Farquhar whose report or judgement I could rely on if I were to send him. I have one of my messengers returned from the Chief of the Baggara Tribe, Sheik Asakir, who writes that he is ready to declare for the Government and ask for pardon, but at present he is afraid of the Mahdi. I wish we could advance at once, as I believe now we should get all the tribes on our side as we went along. The report of the murder of Sheik Manna by the Mahdi is corroborated. Four more soldiers escaped from Obeid came in yesterday: they nearly starved there and died of thirst on the road. I reported all the rifle ammunition here unserviceable (3 out of 10 miss fire). The Minister of War now telegraphs 'the ammunition was good enough for the last Turkish war and also for Candia. Why is it not good enough for the war agst. the rebels?' Can anything be more idiotic?

I had a visit from an old Indian yesterday. He says he is a Hajee whose fate has brought him here (I think he is a refugee, from the Mutinies); he says he has been here many years. He tells me Khartoum swarms with rebels and that my coming at the time I did saved the town. Had I been a few days later there would have been a rising in the town, and it would have been in the Mahdi's possession long ago, but the news of the English coming made them hesitate. They said 'No one can do anything against these cursed English. Look at Theodore of Abyssinia: he was more powerful than anyone, all feared him. The English came and walked through his country, killed his troops and then him'.  
(55)

I think after the fortifications I have in hand are completed, it would take a much stronger Army than is likely to be seen here, to take the place. There was no flanking fire - now there is, all along the line (5 miles), and I have constructed three works, all covering one another, and bringing a

cross fire on the only weak portion of the line of entrenchment . . . . I think the Khedive ought to be pleased; but it is a wretchedly ungrateful government to serve. You read Lord Dufferin's two letters to me? and see the importance he attaches to what I have done. Well, with the exception of the telegram from the Khedive of wh. I sent you a copy, I have received no word from either him, or [the] War Minister, and 'to add insult to injury', we are now only about to get our pay after no end of trouble and correspondence. They had paid me £92 instead of £300 and so on through all my staff.

I cannot understand Baker not writing to me. Lord Dufferin's departure has been a very bad thing for us. Malet is now going. Through Lord Dufferin I got done what I wanted. He fully appreciated all my difficulties and backed me up. Now I feel as if I were to be left in the lurch to escape through as best I can, and get nothing for it in the end.

Khartoum, June 20th 1883 [Marked 'Public']

. . . I am starting up the Nile tomorrow morning . . . . I have a great deal to write to you about. I have heard from the Chief, Asakir, to whom I had written to meet me. He is desirous of submitting and receiving the Khedive's pardon which I can give him. When my messengers reached him he began to make arrangements to come to meet me at once. At that moment letters came to him from King Adam of Tegella (56) . . . . saying that he (King Adam) had received letters from the Mahdi telling him that he was sending his baggage, treasure (plundered at Obeid), wives, and children to Gebel Tegella; asking King Adam to take charge of them; and to join with the Mahdi and fall upon him (Asakir). King Adam went on to write Asakir to come to Tegella, with other persons he mentioned, to consult with him with a view of uniting their forces and falling upon and plundering the Mahdi's family and baggage and making war on the Mahdi himself. On the Chief Asakir getting this letter he sent one of my three messengers back with the news - he kept the other two pending further news being received. He then started off for Tegella and he promised the two messengers that if he were delayed his son Ishmail [sic]

would be sent with them to meet me - otherwise he would come himself.

This is very good news and I am expecting to hear something sensational when I meet Asakir or his son. There is no doubt now of the enmity of the King of Tegella (who is very powerful and sent word to the Mahdi he had sworn to kill him if he attempted to cross his frontier), of Asakir and his tribe, and of Manna's tribe, to the Mahdi. I put a good deal of this down to the influence I gained over the Chiefs when I received them after the battle of the 29th April. I gave them the Khedive's pardon. I promised that they should not be troubled for arrears of taxes, I gave some of them presents of swords and robes, and I paid handsomely the men who had taken messages and letters from me and so communicated with the chiefs. They contrasted this with the Mahdi's treatment, who never gave a dollar to anyone nor paid for anything (I paid well for every head of cattle they brought me), but levied taxes to the amount of a tenth of their belongings. If these Chiefs unite I believe they will crumple up the Mahdi and his Dervishes in a very short time. I fancy they could take 40,000 men at least into the field, and they have not to pass through the country without water - they are already round about Obeid. I shall send them word that they may keep the treasure if they send me the Mahdi's head. The treasure is of very large amount, the contents of the Government treasuries of Obeid and Bara besides the amount pillaged in the towns.

I received a telegram from Berber from the Governor telling me of the arrival of 500 Bashi Bazook Cavalry with horses, and begging of me to send steamers and boats to bring to Khartoum by river the wives, families and baggage which were enormous in quantity and number - and the Governor was at his wits end to provide for them. Now, imagine the Egyptian Government sending me, on active service, over a thousand women and children, knowing too the difficulty I have in providing for the men. It is too imbecile and disgusting . . . .

I also send you . . . . a copy of a letter I have written to the Minister of Finance about my pay. You will see how



disgracefully they have treated me. After giving me the greatest trouble in writing and telegraphing they have not yet paid into my account so much as half what I am entitled to, and they have commenced to deduct some £20 a month from me for an imaginary advance - for they never advanced me a sixpence. The fact is the Egyptian Government is utterly a disreputable one. I will tell you a little of how things are managed here and how Governors of the Sudan become rich. They all know that a change of Ministry or an intrigue may turn them out at any moment; besides, they hate the country, so they go in for making a fortune as quickly as they can, and as it would be impossible to behave more disreputably than the Government does towards all, they have no compunction in swindling the Government and the people alike. For instance, the Governor General of the Soudan has very great power and if at the same time he is known to be a man without a conscience it adds enormously to his strength. So the best thing he can do for his own interests is by some big swindle to show that he is prepared to perpetrate any villainy. The country is full of rich merchants - cent per cent is quite an ordinary profit on their investments. The governor can throw obstacles in the way of export or import of their goods; he can give or refuse a government contract, for grain or anything else; and the merchants find it best to keep on good terms with the Governor Genl. A merchant comes to pay his respects: the G.G. says, 'By the way, I want to borrow £5,000 at 30 per cent - you are a rich man, lend it me'. The merchant agrees of course, and goes. Merchant No. 2 comes in: the G.G. says, 'I have £5,000 loose cash, you can employ it in your trade - I shall lend it to you at 70 per cent'. No.2 Merchant agrees of course. So No.1's money is handed down to No.2, and the G.G. pockets 40 per cent on the transaction. A Government contract is in the market for 20,000 ardebs (57) of grain (we'll say), [and] the two merchants come to the G.G. The market price of the grain is 2 dollars the ardeb. The G.G. says, 'Let me see; grain is dear this year, isn't it? 8 dollars the ardeb - you shall each contract for half the quantity required'. So that 20,000 ardebs are bought for 40,000 dollars, the Government is charged 160,000 dollars, and G.G., No.1 merchant, and No.2 merchant each pocket 40,000 dollars. This is all so well understood that a small percentage of these robberies

is given to all the subordinates hanging on the G.G.'s court, according to the amount of salary each man draws.

Another case: in Darfur the troops are never paid in money. They are kept in arrears of pay for long periods. When the discontent is very great, and they begin to howl, the Governor says, 'very well, there is no money in the treasury but you shall be paid in cloth. Here is a piece, take it, it represents 32 piastres' - which amount is debitted to the soldiers pay account. These pieces of cloth have been bought by the Governor from a merchant for 10 piastres, so the Governor pockets 22 piastres (of the soldiers' pay). The soldier doesn't want the cloth, so takes it to the merchant who buys it back from him for 8 piastres, so the merchant pockets 25 [sic] percent profit. The wretched soldier, after being kept for months and maybe years out of his pay, gets 8 out of every 32 piastres due to him, or just 1/4 of his rights. This system has been going on for so long now that the pieces of cloth are well known and are not even untied: they are done up in small bundles, and are now dirty, and ragged. They have done duty for years as currency between the merchant, Governor and soldier. Now could anything be more utterly disgraceful! (58)

I pity the Soudan. I can see in the distance years and years of the greatest oppression and suffering for the people. The Bashi Bazooks will be the collectors of revenue. They will be a curse on the country - robbery and murder is their trade. A Bashi Bazook paid £50 by Government spends £500 and amasses large sums besides. They are like ferrets in a rabbit warren. They say the Soudan must have an English Governor General, but one honest man is not enough to save the poor people. He would either half kill himself by fighting abuses and then give in as without hope and let things go the old way, or he would kill himself entirely and things would slide back into the old groove. No - the whole machinery of the Government must be swept away. To stamp the disease out not one tainted person must be left. This will never be done, and the whole thing looks hopeless.

The railway from Souakin to Berber has been commenced (59) and is expected, and ought, to do great things for the Soudan in time, but like everything Egyptian I think a fatal mistake has been made: the route sanctioned is not the one which should be taken. Souakin is a bad port, a worse could not be found. There are good ports on the coast. The line is constructed to bring the produce of the Soudan and that from Equatorial Africa to a port on the Red Sea. The produce is brought from the interior in the dry season, never in the rains. The Nile between Khartoum and Berber is on account of the lowness of the water, dangerous and often unnavigable to Berber, but this is not the season (as I say) when the produce is brought to Khartoum. The rail should have run from some other port on the Red Sea, more south than Souakin, and gone direct to Khartoum . . . . It is a great folly I think.

I wish I had some capital to invest and could find a tolerable honest man to act as agent. I would make a fortune in my old age! The banks of the Nile will produce sugar, indigo, cotton, tobacco and oil seeds, all of excellent quality, labour is cheap (one may buy slaves until next year !), and land is to be had for almost nothing, [and] carriage, at the end of the fields. Of course the country will be full of speculators éere long - the rail is to be running in 18 months. I wish they had begun it two years ago! I think I ought to be able to get back to Cairo next winter. If the war is over in October, and I think it should be, they will want me to remain for a month or so to see things settle down. If so I shall I think take my steamer the 'Bordein', wh. I have appropriated as my private yacht, and go up to the Albert Nyanza, visiting all the posts on the way. It will be as good a way as possible of spending two months. I shall get splendid shooting . . . .

Khartoum, June 20th 1883.

We returned to Khartoum yesterday after a six days run on the river with no result, for the Chief, Asakir, did not put in an appearance. I suppose he is still with King Adam. I am disappointed, for I made sure of meeting him, but these Arabs are

never to be depended upon. King Adam of Tegella's ambassadors go back tomorrow. I wrote the King a letter full of compliments and telling him to join with us . . . and march against the Mahdi from the south at the time we do from the N.E. He won't do it of course, but it is impossible to go through his country - I mean for us to do so. The old story, 'want of water', forbids it, and if there were water sufficient, the country is thickly wooded and unsuitable for camels - there isn't one in the country; and we are sure to lose hundreds, and want them replaced. Besides, look at Kaka on the map, to the far south on the White Nile, and you'll see what a distance I should have to take the Army before landing.

Saturday 30th. I have just been [on] my rounds this morning inspecting the fortifications, works, etc., and as usual I have had to interfere. I had ordered a ditch to be dug round the wall of the magazine in order to strengthen the place in a military point of view. I went to see it just now and found a great deal of work done, but my Colonel of Engineers (Egyptian) has so done it that instead of strengthening, he has weakened the position proper manner. I was sorry for the soldiers who were engaged on the work, all their labour for nothing, and when I gave the order to stop working they yelled with delight and rushed off to their tents. They little know that they have to undo all their work and begin de novo.

Khartoum, July 7th 1883.

I enclose a copy of a letter I have sent to Dufferin for you to read. I could go on no longer with Suleiman Pasha. He would ruin everything. I don't know what the Khedive will do. It is 9 days since I telegraphed to Malet and I have had no reply yet. I am certain Suleiman Pasha has paid one of the Ministers for his appt. here or he wouldn't have the cheek to be as obstructive as he is. I don't think they will recall me, but I was obliged to suggest it. However the Khedive and Govt. have treated me infamously throughout . . . I am sending Col. Colborne off to Cairo, he leaves tomorrow. He has been several times at death's door - 4 out of 8 [of the European officers] have been invalided

in 5 months. I have told the Minister of War not to send Colborne or Walker back. Martin is getting better and anxious to get back for the campaign in Kordofan, but I don't think he'll manage it. The Daily News has sent its special war correspondent, Mr. [O'] - Donovan here, and the Pictorial World has sent an artist, Mr. Power.(60) I hope we shall be able to show them something.

Khartoum, July 17th '83.

At last a telegram has come from the Cabinet at Cairo, giving strongest direction that my orders in matters military are to be obeyed without any question - luckily, late but not too late. The only cavalry I have have been delayed (300 of them) at Berber for more than ten days, when every day is worth its weight in gold to organise them in. I have no more information about the water supply on the routes, and suppose I shall have to find it out myself. I am most anxious to get off on the campaign by the 15th August, to seize the crops on the road before they are cut - if there are any crops. The Mahdi has sent a proclamation to Khartoum calling upon all to join the true Mahdi and not risk the chance of Paradise by fighting on the side of infidels. He declares his army to be 200,000 strong (he lies!). I'm getting quite angry with the staff who take their meals with me, De Coetlogon, Farquhar, Dr. Rosenberg. Farquhar has a bad attack of home sickness wh. is depressing to all others, and Coetlogon and the Dr. last night sat all through dinner without saying a word, with their heads in their hands looking as if they were going to be hanged tomorrow morning . . . . The English mail comes in the day after tomorrow. It is the only thing to look forward to . . . I shall be delighted to clear out of the country. I only hope we shall get through the campaign successfully. The difficulties are enormous, and sometimes the affair seems hopeless, but I trust I shall pull through. But the Government, the country, and the people are not worth serving.



Khartoum, July 18th 1883.

This morning I inspected the cavalry and found horses and saddles pretty good, but the men! such a set of ruffians - unable to ride and each carrying in his hands a gigantic rifle. I don't think, even if they could be induced to pursue an enemy, they would be of any use. I found the horses' grain fully half dirt and rubbish, and the hay ration less than half what it should be, the contractor doubtless sharing the profit with the officer. Wherever one goes, and whatever one looks into there is the same rascality, lying, and apathy. The truth is the whole country, Government, Army and everything connected with the country is corrupt and hopeless - utterly hopeless. I have written a long letter to Lord Dufferin, but directed it to Constantinople instead of England wh, I'm afraid is a mistake on my part . . . . I am very sorry to have to ask to be recalled if not placed in full instead of divided, as it really was, authority, but it is imperative. I don't know what they'll do. It is now a fortnight and I have received no reply. I don't suppose any man has had to contend against similar difficulties.

Khartoum, July 20th/83.

The Government . . . . have telegraphed to the Gov. Genl. that the Generals and Chief officers of the Army are to be informed that they are to obey my orders in all matters. So far so good. Suleiman Pasha, the senior General, was ordered to send a copy of this telegram to all the Colonels. He told me he had done so. I made enquiries two days after and found he had not, so I showed it to some of them myself, and I must now make Suleiman carry out the order to send the copies.

They say it never rains but it pours, and verily it is the case with me just now in regard to anxieties. The General Comg. on the Blue Nile has telegraphed to say he has no food for the army there. He doesn't telegraph a month before the food is consumed but waits until it is all gone and then telegraphs. The result is that as all the steamers have gone down to Berber to bring up stores, baggage and women and children who never should

have been sent, I am obliged to send my steamer, the one I always keep ready so that I may go off anywhere in case of emergency, to tow a barge full of grain to Senaar, and as she will be away ten days I am left helpless if I ought to visit any of the posts, or hear of any party of rebels crossing the White Nile. The same day I received a telegram from Dongola saying that 58 Egyptian soldiers had deserted with their arms and ammunition on their companies' being ordered to join me here for the Kordofan campaign. They had been followed by a party and overtaken but they took up a position and said they would fire upon the party if they approached. The Governor of Dongola telegraphed to know what he should do. I replied, 'If you cannot capture them without using your rifles, fire on them and shoot them without hesitation'. I ordered him to telegraph me what should occur. I have heard nothing further. It is a serious business, for it is a question whether their comrades will fire on them, and if they don't it amounts possibly to mutiny. Meanwhile I am stuck here with no steamer. To add to my comfort Capt. Evans my Interpreter has sent me in his resignation - a nice piece of ingratitude after all I have done for him. He came to me twenty times in Cairo begging me to get him appointed and saying he would take any pay. After an immensity of trouble I got him appointed on £400 a year, much more than he would have been glad to get. I afterwards got him a commission as Captain (he was a civilian). I shall not let him go - if he chooses to desert that is another thing.

Today the post brought the Egyptian Gazette and I find in it all I have written to Sartorius confidentially about Suleiman Pasha published to the world, and Suleiman Pasha is here, still the senior Egyptian General, and it is of the greatest importance that a good understanding should exist. If there was one thing more likely than any other to create a breach between the English and Egyptian officers it is the publication of this private correspondence . . . , and just before the commencement of the campaign. How Sartorius can have been such a fool I cannot make out. It may have the most mischievous effect. In fact there is no knowing what may come of it.

I cannot get my cavalry here to organise them, no amount of orders will make the officials move. First one thing, then another is given as an excuse. The men and horses as they are are not cavalry, they would be perfectly useless and all this valuable time is wasted in wh. I might be trying to make something out of them. They coolly say there is no forage here, when I ordered it to be collected 4 months ago, and 3 months ago they reported it had been done. I have literally no more information about the roads to Obeid than I had on first arrival.

The rebels are coming and going freely in and out [of] Khartoum - there is no police. Col. Ibrahim Bey is now Commdy. in Khartoum and on the fortifications. I wrote to him the day before yesterday desiring him to send me a report as to what regulations he had for the guarding of the entrenchments, how many guards, how many sentries, where posted, who visited them and how often, also what orders he had for the assembly of the troops in case of alarm, etc. He replied (like a true Egyptian) that the fortifications were not finished, that they were not yet strong, so he had issued no orders about guards and sentries, nor for the troops turning out in case of alarm. When the fortifications were quite finished he would issue all the necessary regulations and orders! . . . ' He couldn't see that the weakness of the unfinished fortifications called for more vigilance on the part of the troops and more care on his own part to issue strict orders for guards etc. and clear instructions for guidance in case of alarm. But they are all alike - look where you please from the Pashas down, you find nothing but incompetence, imbecility, cowardice, apathy; they are all virtues here. The country isn't worth serving.

The Governor General is still away buying camels. He is frittering away £25,000 (putting I suppose £10,000) into his own pocket) on animals which I am perfectly certain will turn out almost, if not quite, useless to us. Before the last campaign Giegler Pasha bought camels. I am assured here that the price for each camel charged to Government was \$60, Giegler paid \$16 and pocketed the difference. We found the camels useless - they fell five or six times on each short march and died like rotten

sheep. What were brought back were sold for about \$2 each. If I were an Egyptian Chief of the Staff I should insist upon having my share of the amount stolen from the £25,000 now being expended, and I dare say I should get £5000. I look upon them as thieves, they look upon me as an idiot. It is merely a question of country. I daresay if I remained long enough in Egypt I should begin to doubt which was the proper view to take of the matter. We shall never get off on this campaign by the 15th August. The reinforcements, (wh. I am going to leave here in garrisons) have not been brought to the Soudan quickly enough from Egypt. They won't be here in time, and they will not have been able to collect enough lame and sick camels in the time. The food supplies have not come up from Berber, [and] the cavalry and stores have been delayed there quite unnecessarily for 3 weeks.

It is impossible for me - 1 man - to keep all these matters straight. We shall not get off before the crops have been cut in the rebel country, and besides their having succeeded in getting in their year's food, the seizing of which I placed so much importance on, we shall be without forage for all our animals. I assure you, when I look at all these things in their different aspects I feel that the undertaking is almost hopeless, and were it not for the fact of my being bound in honor [sic] to endeavour to carry it through, I would feel inclined to pitch my tarboosh into the Nile, kick all the officials after it, shake the dust off my shoes and leave them to go to the devil their own way - and the sooner the better for the rest of mankind. When the 3000 reinforcements arrive from Cairo I shall have over 21,000 men on the two rivers, and I would give the whole for two Brigades of English (if not Wolseley's boys), German, or Indian troops.

Saturday 21st July . . . . I have just scribbled off a letter to Lord Dufferin. I thought it as well to let him know that the private Cabinet of the Khedive had at last telegraphed orders about my views being carried out. I wonder if he will go to India as Viceroy. I wish he would take me as Military Secretary. I have heard from Col. Colborne since he left; he had

reached Berber and was starting for Souakin . . . . He has been a disgrace to the staff ever since he joined and I have telegraphed to the Minister of War that I don't want him back again. You ask if I have anyone on my staff I can make a companion of. Well, No! Farquhar is the best and I like him pretty well. Seckendorff is not at all a bad officer and a gentleman. The others are of not much account. Massey is a good youngster but very young for his age. De Coetlogon is simply useless, and there is nothing to be got out of Warner. Evans, I am glad to say, has thought better of his wish to resign, and has been up to see me this morning.

I shall be glad when all this is over. If the Mahdi and his Army would come out and have one good battle, and my men didn't run away, we might have it all over in Sept. It is a most anxious time. If my men don't stand and we get licked, the whole of the Soudan will be again in a blaze. Khartoum will be taken by the rebels, the bloodshed would be enormous, and England would have eventually to send an army to put things right - and such an Army it is I have. However one must hope for the best and I daresay it will turn out all well.

Khartoum, July 24th 83.

I found after all [that] the telegram from the Khedive's Cabinet does not put me in a better position and all my directives and advice are put on one side. The truth is [that] since Lord Dufferin's departure no one cares about this expedition and as the Egyptians see that I shall be unsupported they think they'll do as they like. My position is untenable and I have now sent in my resignation to the Minister of War - by telegraph. I told you in my last that 56 men had deserted with their arms and had threatened to fire upon the party sent to bring them back, and that the Governor of Dongola had telegraphed to know if he would be justified in firing at them. It was a matter requiring prompt and vigorous action. What would the Mahdi say to a sixth of the soldiers at Dongola defying the Government and going off with their arms? I told Suleiman Pasha . . . . to telegraph to Dongola that they were first to try and



bring the men back by fair means, but if they resisted they were to shoot them down without hesitation. Suleiman Pasha said he would telegraph to that effect, but he did not do so, and I discovered four days afterwards that he had on leaving me, without my knowledge, called a Military Council of Egyptian officers; the result being that no action at all was taken. So besides allowing this serious affair to slide, he had told the officers what my views were and showed how he meant to disregard them. He never told me anything more, and left me to find it out. It is impossible, especially after my experience in the Senaar campaign, for me to go on a fresh one with a man like this unless I have him completely under my orders. At present he holds equal position with me and is not told that he must attend to my advice in military matters. Instead of his doing so, he obstructs me in every way he can. I am sorry to say the Senaar province is showing signs of becoming unsettled. You see we have not men to establish military posts all over such a large country, and what men we have are bad and officers worthless. And I have not been able to send the steamers up and down the river as I wished to.

I am much troubled with loafers of sorts, German principally, who make their way to Khartoum and throw themselves upon me for employment. Where will the German loafer go to next - fancy coming to such an out of the world place as this. I have nothing for them. A man came last evening who had walked 1500 miles, and told me he was a German fireman (a stoker), that he was in rags but had just bought some clothes on credit to appear before me in. He seemed to think I had to look after him, and threw the whole responsibility of feeding, clothing, liquoring and providing him with pocket money upon me.

Khartoum, Augt 4/83.

All today I have been feeling like Judas Iscariot. They have recalled Suleiman Pasha and he left today. I gave him all honors [sic] in the ay of the troops turning out and salute of Artillery. Hundreds of people came to say goodbye to him and he embraced me at the river side. I felt like the school boy who

had told tales of his school fellow, I am sorry for him but I couldn't possibly go on another campaign with him . . . . I have been worried again most terribly (the old story you will say). Mr. O'Donovan, the Daily News correspondent, arrived four days ago and ever since he has been drunk, violent, and using inflammatory language to the Natives in the Bazaar. He laid about, on his back, in the public streets in Khartoum for 48 hours in the most disgusting condition. Viziatelli [sic] (the man Colborne brought to the Soudan and whom he left behind) (61) joined O'Donovan in his drinking - they armed themselves with revolvers and threatened people's lives and did everything outrageous, bringing the English into contempt and disgrace. O'Donovan's behaviour was most dangerous in the present state of the fanatic native mind. Had he been murdered in a row it might probably have given rise to an attack on and massacre of all the Christians. Thank God at last he is lying down - he has eaten nothing for four days and has drunk himself into a half state of delirium tremens. I took his weapons yesterday. He then went off, quite drunk, with a slave dealer - however he was brought back. And this is the man I have to put up with for the duration of the Campaign. I turned Viziatelli [sic] out of the house he was living in as it is allotted to officers of my staff. I have told him nothing shall induce me to allow him to go on the campaign . . .

Khartoum bazaar was full of a report that the rebels had attacked Slatin Bey (62) at Darra, killed him, and 6,000 men. I'm sure I hope it isn't true - they believe it in the bazaar. The Mahdi's head man is a certain Elias Pasha (63) - Gordon knew him. He was driven by the misbehaviour of the local government towards him to turn rebel. But for the misbehaviour of the Governor General at the time Elias Pasha would not have joined the rebels and Obeid would still have been in the hands of the Government. The story is a long one - too long to write now - but I have notes of it, and I shall proclaim it some day.

Khartoum, Augt. 7th/83.

The condition of affairs here in the Soudan is bad;

1st The garrison at Fazogli on the Blue Nile [is] out of reach of us, with no food, no clothing, surrounded by rebels. They have probably, to save themselves from starvation, murdered their officers, and gone over to the rebels, or they may have been cut up. I am sending a steamer to the nearest point with food and a message to them to come (if they can).

2 The excitement and threatened rising again in Senaar. I am sending two columns into the country but I have to use the transport of the Column going to Kordofan.

3. There is no transport with any of the garrisons on either Blue or White Nile, and no money to buy any. Consequently the garrisons cannot move out after the rebels when necessary.

4. Troops still in arrears of pay - some on Blue Nile as much as 25 months.

5. Some troops in Blue Nile garrisons have refused to obey orders and go where required - consequent on not being paid - and they have neither boots nor clothing.

6. My reinforcements and stores detained at Berber: I cannot get things sent up. Steamers kept here doing nothing for days, and then sent away with families instead of men and ammunition - contrary to my direct orders.

7. No information of water supply en route to Obeid. Authorities won't obtain it and know nothing.

8. Absolutely no money - and I must have great deal and quickly.

9. Forage for horses etc. quite unfit for them to eat. Govern't in Cairo pay highly, Govern't here and the contractor supply dried sticks and earth instead of grain, and pocket the money.

10. Not a quarter of the transport I require come in and possibly won't for a month.

Thank heaven this [is] the last day of the Bairam feast which follows the 30 day Ramadan fast. During the whole of this time nothing has been done - the whole of the officials have slept all day and dissipated all night. I have sent two of my staff to Berber to expedite the departure of the troops and stores, and I am sending one with each of these small columns, Baron Seckendorff with that from Senaar, and Col. de Coetlogon from Kawa. I'm afraid the latter will make an ass of himself - I cannot trust him a bit - but I have no one else to send. He has had no experience of campaigning and has no judgement, or temper. However he must go, with written instructions. A messenger I sent to Obeid has returned with a note from the Chief of the Italian priests there. I asked him to send me all information he could, and he has sent me none. He simply says '21st June we are all well. We hope to see you soon, and successful'. This was quite enough to hang him if found out, so he might as well have told me something of the Mahdi's strength etc., etc. It cost me \$200 and I have got nothing for it. It is satisfactory to know the prisoners are well, but I wanted information. It is stupid.

Khartoum, Augt 11/83 [letter marked 'Public']

I think I told you in my last that the 'Mahdi' had sent agents and letters to Senaar to stir up the tribes in that country again to rebel. I had ordered two small columns to march through the country, one of 850 men from Kawa and one of 1300 men from Senaar (the lown of). One of the Chiefs, Sheik Ahmed of the Bagagia [sic] tribe of Arabs, has come in and submitted. He was fighting against us at the battle of Marabia and afterwards ran away to Kordofan. He has returned and declares he has not been preaching rebellion and swears allegiance. So far so good, but I hear nothing more of the assembly of Arabs at Aboot [sic] and shall not until the column gets on the move. Today the 11th Augt. (7th Shawal) is the day named for a general rising of the Arabs by the Mahdi, but I don't expect to hear of its coming off. He has been pretty active and has sent his agents all over the country for hundreds of miles with letters directing them

all over the country for hundreds of miles with letters directing them to 'rebel, shed blood, and block the roads'. I received a telegram yesterday from the Governor of Souakin (!) telling me that a certain agent of the Mahdi named Osman Dagna (64) had come down to that country and was raising the tribes and threatening Souakin. Another telegram came a few hours afterwards saying that the rebel had with 2,000 men demanded the surrender of Sinkat, a town 45 miles distant from Souakin, with its treasury and arms. On the refusal of the Governor to give up the town Osman Dagna attacked it, and was fortunately repulsed with the loss of 250 men and it is said Osman Dagna himself wounded and since dead. Seeing that the rebellion had got into our rear and so far as Souakin I thought it very probable I should hear of a similar movement about Berber, and as that is a very important place I telegraphed at once and halted there two Battalions of the reinforcements which are on their way up to me. This may delay the departure of the Army for Kordofan, but the more I see of the state of affairs here the more convinced I feel that no attempt at present should be made to reconquer Kordofan. Lord Dufferin was perfectly right in his advice to secure the Province of Senaar and hold the two rivers, and let Kordofan alone for the present.

There is no money at Cairo. There is no money here. The troops are in arrears of pay, many of them in the remote garrisons also without clothes or food, the country is being traversed by Agents of Mahomet Achmet [sic] who still have power to raise disturbances and stir up rebellion. Khartoum itself is full of rebels. When the Army has gone to Kordofan there will be the more opportunity for the Mahdi's Emissaries and the less restriction on the Arab tribes. There is nothing known of the routes into Kordofan as regards water supply for such a body of men as we take - the advance must therefore be slow as we must feel our way, and no positive result will follow the Army's advance for some time. Meanwhile there will be false reports of all kinds, set going by the Mahdi's adherents, wh. will be believed by the Arabs and will probably be followed by disturbances. If we reconquer Kordofan (wh. we undoubtedly should do), we could not bring back the Army, as the whole force would be required to garrison the country. In fact the Army in



the Soudan ought to be increased by 12,000 men. It consists now of 21,000 men, more than the Governmt. can pay.

With the Army we have now, I could secure the whole of the Province of Senaar and the country from Dongola to Gebelain, following the White Nile, and to Roseires on the Blue Nile - the farthest post we ought to hold. I would abandon the equatorial provinces (or if the Govt. think differently they might still be retained), and after a time the Mahdi and his rebellion would collapse. Grain and supplies of all kinds would be cut off from Kordofan [and] the communication by the Nile, and by caravan being stopped. I think with rebellion breaking out in unexpected places over such an enormous tract of country, as it is, it would be far wiser to secure the country the Government now possess, than to try and recover remote districts which never paid and to which to withdraw the Army would cause danger to the valuable territory now held, and especially when one takes into consideration the insolvency of the Egyptian and Soudan treasuries. But I'm afraid I may be only repeating what I have said in former letters. However, this rising of the tribes so far off as Souakin is quite a new phase in the state of affairs. I fear next to hear we are cut off from telegraphic communication with Cairo. However, it may be only a splutter on the part of the Arabs and may be put down at once. If it increases they will have to send troops from Cairo (Wood's new Army) for they are much nearer than we are - rail and steamer the whole way.

Ala al-Din Pasha has come back today, I'm glad to say. I hope now I shall get him to do something, for matters have been at a standstill. I have recd. another telegram from Malet saying Cherif Pasha (the Prime Minister) wishes to know if I am satisfied to remain on, now Suleiman Pasha has been removed. I reply that the orders issued by the Cabinet to Ala al-Din Pasha do not even now ensure that my plans and orders in the next campaign will be carried out and obeyed; and I am still awaiting the issue of such orders. I will not cancel my resignation until I see the orders issued by the private Cabinet which oblige Ala al-Din Pasha and the other generals (there are 4 now) to obey my

directions in all military matters. You know the trouble I have had about the Cavalry to get them in here. I find that no order was even sent for them to be moved from Halfaya. Suleiman Pasha was lying to me for 5 weeks. I should have been in the field a month ago.

(25th) Rashid Pasha, who was Governor Genl. of Eastern Soudan and Red Sea and who was ordered to join me from Masowah on Suleiman Pasha being removed, sends me word that he has got as far as Kassala but is unable to get further as the tribes are in rebellion. He says he will if I order him remain at Kassala and try what he can do to put down the disturbance with the assistance of the Arabs who remain faithful to the Governr. I'm afraid he has a difficult job as he has no soldiers - but as I cannot get him here I have told him to do his best. He was coming to command a Brigade with the Kordofan Col. I must now take away from Khartoum Ibrahim Pasha Haider, the man I most trusted in to keep order in the place; but I want him to command Rashid Pasha's Brigade.

A very influential and holy Sheik, (65) a man who can raise 20 to 30,000 followers, has in a most unexpected and unaccountable way joined the rebels about Souakin. He has lived always in Souakin and is well known to Ala al-Din Pasha who tells me he is quite astonished at the news. The Sheik and he have often conversed about the Mahdi and he proposed (?) utter disbelief in him, and has always been friendly to the Govt; besides he is a man of education and intelligence and must know that eventually the rebellion must be crushed. The only reason we can imagine for his conduct is that his son may have been killed at the attack on Sinkat. It was known that his son had joined. I have strengthened the Berber Garrison altho' I can ill afford the men, and telegraphed to Major Warner (whom I had sent there to push on the reinforcements and stores), to report how Berber can best be fortified - as they have no work at all there; but I don't suppose Warner knows anything about it. I am in a dreadful fix for money. The Governr. have not sent us any. We have only £7,000 in the Treasury. The road to Souakin is blocked and it must be sent by Korosko. I have telegraphed today. They

ought to have sent it long ago. The Khedive thinks the Minister of Finance has sent £50,000 already. He hasn't sent a penny.

Khartoum, Sept. 1st/83

I am now getting well into harness as Commander in Chief and strange to relate I find I have less work and worry than I had before I was the officially acknowledged head of the Forces. The fact is I have not now to fight for everything I want done, an amount of obstruction and opposition is removed, and altho' everything has to come to me I have established a system and instead of sending requests and recommendations, being approved, and then having to put my foot down and insist, I give the order, and altho' my orders are not carried out as quickly as I would wish, matters are expedited. I have made Farquhar Chief of the Staff and he is getting into the work well. Capt. Herlth (the Austrian Uhlan) I have sent to the Camp at Omdurman to look after and drill in a way the Cavalry. He is an excellent officer. I'm afraid we have glanders amongst the horses - three have died and 26 have all the symptoms. I have isolated them from the others and shall inspect them on Monday, and if I am satisfied it is glanders, shoot them. My Veterinary Chest I hope will arrive tomorrow in the 'Telhaweem' from Berber. Sir Evelyn Wood got it for me. I shall be then able to treat the other sick horses: there are 71 on the sick list. I have only 378 fit for service. I am crossing camels all day long from the other side of the Nile to Omdurman. I hope to get them all across by next Thursday, but it is a great business: 5000 camels and we have only one steamer available for towing and only 34 flats. 350 only were crossed yesterday - that is not half enough. There is no forage for them at Omdurman but I have provided grain and they will have to live on that. It is an unaccustomed food for camels and I'm afraid they won't do on it.

I shall be very glad to get off. I shall march with the troops from Omdurman. Ala al-Din Pasha wanted me to let Ibrahim Pasha take them down to Dueim and he and I go down so far by steamer, but I shall march. I want to instruct and practice the men on the way. My column from Dueim will be 8,300 Regular

Infantry, 1,100 Bashi Bazooks (370 or thereabouts Cavalry), 100 Cuirassiers cavalry, 6 Krupp Guns, 10 mountain guns, 6 Nordenfeldt guns, 8 Rocket tubes. Also some Shagias or native irregulars, about 800 men; altogether about 11,000 men.

I'm afraid my progress towards Bara will be slow, as I shall have to dig wells all the way and fortify my posts. I have discovered yesterday, after much trouble, a quantity of wire which will be invaluable in making wire entanglements for the protection of the posts while being fortified and wells dug. For six weeks they have assured me that not a yard of wire existed in Khartoum.

I heave a sigh of relief every time I realise the fact that I have got rid of Suleiman Pasha. The Governor General tells me he has learnt that Suleiman Pasha used to go round and order off the men I had set to work on the fortifications! No one dare[d] tell me, for they didn't know who was real King of Brentford. We have been in great straits for want of money - none has come from Cairo. I got the government to dispense with the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent usually charged for Bills on Cairo, as I was told I could then get money, but only £10,000 came in - and I discovered afterwards that the Governor General of the Central Provinces, Iuseff Bey (66) (whom I got dismissed the other day), who had the management of this, had notwithstanding the Government order still tried to charge  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The result was that the merchants sent their money by camels via Korosko to Cairo instead of taking Govt. Bills and we lost it. However, I have managed within the last few days, by getting Ala al-Din Pasha to send for the leading merchants, to borrow £35,000 - this will help us . . .

. . . The reports of the state of the country between Berber and Souakin, and also between Kassala and Souakin, are better - the country seems quiet for the time being. I'm afraid my chain pumps will be of no use when the water gets low in the wells. I mean below 45 feet in depth to the water, as men still have not power sufficient to lift the column [?] of water. I have no horse gear.

Khartoum, September 5th/83

I am now in the fuss excitement of the last few days before the march, and as you may imagined have scarcely time to do anything not connected with the march. Yesterday I went to the camp at Omdurman and inspected the forces. They really turn out remarkably well considering all things. There are so many men on duty of various kinds, guards on camels etc., etc. that I only saw about 2,000 Infantry and 400 Cavalry. The Bashi Bazook cavalry have been instructed by Capt. Herith and yesterday executed two charges tolerably well; as did the Culrassiers (but without their armour). I had a reception afterwards of all the officers, and from their demeanour I really believe they are very glad to have me as Comr. in Chief. I am told by outsiders who can judge that both officers and men are delighted at the change. I am sorry to say that Mr. Marno, (67) the governor of Fagogli who was sent away in a boat to try and get supplies sent to the garrison, died here yesterday. He was wretchedly ill when he arrived and [when] I saw him I told the Dr. he would be dead in a fortnight. The unfortunate Greek sutler too who accompanied us on the Senaar campaign died the day before yesterday. He had remained at Dueim and set up a store there. He caught a bad fever and was brought here by steamer; dying a few hours after arrival, poor beggar. He was very useful to us on the campaign. We are always kept in a state of excitement by sensational news received from all parts. Yesterday (or rather the night before) came a telegram from Berber that Suleiman Pasha had been killed at Sinkat, that the Arabs were up all over the country and Berber in danger. Suleiman Pasha had 700 troops with him so we supposed they had been thrashed. I sent off an Engineer officer alone to Berber with instructions to make a fortified camp. I have just now received another telegram telling me the first news was false, and on the contrary a telegram was following which would give me good news. So I await it\*

\* (It came and confirmed the former news !! )



The Bastier chain pump I had ordered to be made in the Arsenal was completed this morning and I had it set up in a well and worked. It worked splendidly. The diameter of the tube is 1/4 inch larger than Bastier makes them and if we can only find the water and within 50 feet of the surface it will deliver over 3,000 gallons an hour.(68) I have also got together 5 Nortons pumps (Abyssinian pumps). I shall take the Engineer with me from the Arsenal with two smiths, a portable forge, and a carpenter. I gave the order when at the arsenal this morning. I thought the Engineer looked rather 'down in the mouth', but he picked up afterwards and has promised to take everything necessary and come up river with the heavy baggage. I took Ala al-Din Pasha, the Governor Genl., and Major Genl. Ibrahim Pasha, to see the pump work and they were astonished. They had looked upon it all along as a toy (a fad of mine) I was making. They declare the pump sufficient to supply the Army, [and] so it may be if we can get it into sufficient water - there's the rub. This is Wednesday - tomorrow I shall get the last English mail before starting. I march on Saturday.

Thursday 6th Sept. . . . A soldier deserter has just come in to me from Obeid. He has a bullet in his leg, just healed up, and a spear wound in his hand wh. he got only a few days ago he says that all the soldiers will come over to us on our arrival near Obeid: these are the men whom the Mahdi captured at Obeid and took into his service. He says the Mahdi will advance and meet us. He doesn't think there will be more than 12,000 men with him. If my Egyptians only stand firm I am prepared for 40,000. I learnt 'stand firm' - 'fire low' in Arabic and at Marabia I went up and down the ranks while they were firing, quietly repeating these two short sentences. The enemy are sure to fire high, and probably as they are running forward to the attack, so will not do great damage. I should like to keep men from firing at all until the enemy were pretty close and then mow them down, but I daren't put the Egyptian nerves to such a strain and so I am obliged to let them waste ammunition. The news of the country from Berber to Souakin is bad. The Arabs have quite blocked the road. They have possession of all the watering places, including the main one, 'Ariab', where they are in force.

They have stopped the mails from Cairo, having taken the last and torn up and destroyed the contents of the bags. They are sending troops from Cairo but not enough, and as there is not a single camel to be had now, unless they bring transport from elsewhere they won't be able to move, and water will have to be carried now. It is selling at Souakin at a dollar and a half the small goat skin . . . . It is a fortunate thing that the Mahdi didn't set up this 'blockade' three months earlier, for if he had he would have stopped our reinforcements and supplies, and put us 'in a hat'.

You ask about Colonel Colborne. He is at Cairo. He never did anything but bring discredit on the Staff: you cannot imagine what a disreputable old gentleman he is. Half the Army thought him drunk; the other half thought him a fool or idiot - they were both partly right - at all events it was very desirable to get rid of him, and since he went to Cairo on sick certificate (he brought his illness on himself) I have dispensed with his services. He gets 6 months full pay and goes. He telegraphed to me yesterday through Sartorius begging to come back, but I refused. Mr. Morris, a mechanic who came here with the Nordenfeldt guns and was given the rank of 2nd Lieut, I am sorry to say got a sunstroke yesterday. I shall be obliged to leave him behind I think. He is a very stout, full blooded man and I have expected him to have something of the sort for a long time. I hope he will recover but I'm sure he won't be fit to go with us. The hottest time of the year is I hear from 15 Sept, when the South wind ceases to blow, to 15 Oct. when the North wind commences. It is the time of fever between those dates, but directly the North wind sets in the sick get well and the well get better. I'm anxious in case we should be delayed longer at our base Depot, for the crops, such few as there are, will be cut if we don't proceed at once and so we shall be deprived of forage. I'm afraid I shall lose many horses, for it is impossible to carry grain for them and there will be little grass.

'On the march in Kordofan', Sept. 11th/83.

I left Khartoum three days ago and am now on the march down the west bank of the White Nile for my base depot between Dueim and Tura al Hadred [Turā' al-Hadrā']. You should see my face, it is simply raw. The thermometer in my tent (a Bombay one) [is] 105° - you may imagine what it is in the sun. I have about 7,000 men with me now and 5,000 camels. The soldiers have never been brigaded and the officers know absolutely nothing. There is no such thing as a Brigade Major . . . . nor are there quarter-masters of Regts., so I and my few officers have our hands full. The officers I have with me, excepting Farquhar, are Germans - Warner and Massey are still at Berber . . . ., and as I have to give my orders in that language, or French, which orders have to be put into Arabic for the Egyptians, the difficulty is great, more especially as no Egyptian officer or soldier has ever been taught to look upon an order as a thing to be obeyed, but only as a suggestion thrown out by some one, who happens to be made a bigger man than he, and which is a subject for discussion and approval or otherwise - and then to be forgotten. No wonder Egyptian Armies have been cut up and massacred in the Soudan if the fearful confusion and chaos existed wh. I saw with this force [at] the first break up of camp, and going into camp. But I have worked myself to death and tried hard for patience, and the officers have backed me up well and I hope in a week or ten days to see something quite different. It is vastly improved already.

Today I got information of a party of 400 men sent here by the Mahdi to make a raid on our camels . . . . We are likely to encounter them two days hence. I suppose they will try to cut off some of the baggage camels. It is a most difficult matter to march in a formation ready to go into a square at any moment, and to protect 5,000 camels at the same time. If I had the best of English or Indian troops I could manage it, but I cannot trust these men to fight if by themselves. I have about 1,000 men guarding these 5,000 camels but I feel certain they would bolt if attacked.

I must answer your questions about Khartoum. Of course there is not a single English person living there. It is quite uncivilised, and a place no one would think of living in. There is a French man there, a Mr. Marquet. (69) He is an agent for a merchant dealing in gum, ostrich feathers, and ivory and he gets supplies up for sale to the Govt. officials . . . .

12 Sept. . . . Therm: 108<sup>0</sup> in my tent. We have just halted from the march. This morning we got off at 6.5 a.m., and into our new camp at 12.10. The senior Egyptian B. Genl. is down with a touch of the sun. Seckendorff also this morning was affected by it . . . . I'm sorry to say I find the crops all failed in the country for want of rain. This is bad for our finding water by digging wells. I have only done 10 or 11 miles marching a day as I am obliged to observe the strictest precautions to guard against surprise and consequently we don't get off very early. An hour before daybreak the troops fall in and stand to their arms - that is the time the enemy usually attack. At day break the cavalry patrols go out and reconnoitre. After this the tents are allowed to be struck and the camels loaded, and then it takes a long time getting 5,000 camels formed up on the left flank of the column, and the column itself, 7000 strong, takes some time forming. I can't get off until a little after 6 o'clock. I am in a great state of anxiety in case my soldiers should go sick and I have no means of carrying them. Our patrols took 5 armed Arabs prisoners today but I have got no information from them . . . .

Oh, it is so hot! I can't write much more. I hope my men won't go sick, for I have nothing but a baggage camel to carry them. You should see my face !! cracked all over, and I am perfectly covered with prickly heat wh. is interspersed with boils. Brody says 'There's very few gentlemen Sir, as wouldn't have burnt up long ago' !

I wish the Mahdi would come and have it out here, but he says he thinks we shall never get over the waterless region, but that if we do he'll come and meet us - in three lines: troops taken at Obeid first, Arabs next, then he himself and his 3000

Dervishes. If I have the luck to catch him I'll string him up before ten minutes are over . . . .

'On the march, Kordofan', Saturday Sept. 15/83.

I have just got out pen and ink to write to you but the ink dries in my pen so soon as I get it to paper - with heat at 108° to 110°, it is writing under difficulty. I gave the Army a short march today: they ought to have had a halt but I want to get along as fast as I can. We only marched from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. These soldiers fairly astonish me with their endurance. No troops I know of could do as much. They carry enormous weight, and yet in this terrific heat, not a man out of 7,000 has fallen out in a week's march of 6 hours a day!! It is astonishing. I daren't take the force [on] longer marches - at 11 a.m. the little breeze dies out and the air is like a furnace. The officers suffer a good deal. Seckendorff told me yesterday he was sure he'd never see Germany again - the heat would kill him. I said it was nothing to what it took to kill a man! But I don't think I could keep them out an hour longer. You wouldn't know me if you were to meet me now - stubby whiskers and beard all over my face, which is covered with flakes of skin wh. have peeled off, [and] is seamed with cracks, and as red as a piece of raw beef. Hawkes helmet wh. I had made in London will protect my head tho' with a puggaree.

We loot a lot of cattle every day, so the men get plenty of beef. All the cattle has been driven inland some miles off our line of route, but some escape and return to drink at the river. These we capture. The villages are deserted except by women and children - the men have, the women say, gone off to join the Mahdi. We have come across no enemy yet, but our scouts have made prisoners of some 30 to 40 men. I believe some of the officers are angry with me for not hanging or shooting them at once, but for the sake of punishing a few unimportant rebels I don't want to run the risk of the Mahdi taking his revenge on the Europeans in his power. Capt. Herlth is doing excellent service with his Bashi Bazook reconnoitrings: he keeps a good look out for 5 miles to our front and right flank - our left flank is



protected by the river. He is a very good officer. He brought in five men yesterday he had taken in a village 5 miles to our right, one got a sword cut over the head, and another on his arm. They were in a hut wh. contained a large quantity of telegraph wire and other material, so he sent them on to me loaded with coils of wire round their necks. I shall leave them prisoners at Dueim. I shall get to Dueim on the 19th . . . .

17th. Heat 110° in my tent. We had a frightfully hot march today. Yesterday Mr. Power, the Pictorial World artist, quite went off his head from the heat. Today his pistol exploded accidentally and shot the camel he was riding.

The Bashi Bazooks are too awful. The Comg. officer of one squadron sent to me yesterday to say he begged me to interfere and make an example of one of his men. This man had refused to obey an order and, spoken to by the major, loaded his carbine and tried to shoot him. I have him irons. Herith has at last complained to me that he cannot get them to obey orders. Yesterday men he had sent to the front to scout went off to the right to loot a village. He followed them and found them ill-treating some women. He was obliged to draw his revolver on them to get them to obey him, but they were just as likely to shoot him as not. They gallop their horses so much about the country to every village to loot that I don't think there will be a horse left among them when we get to Obeid. They don't feed them or give them water - in fact they do everything they like and nothing they don't like. I would gladly be quit of them. I have over 900 - cut-throats and robbers. We have disarmed all the Arabs we have found. The arms were entrusted to the Bashi Bazooks to take to the camp. I now find they have been selling the arms back to the Arabs - a dollar a piece. I shall have to shoot one or two of them I fear.

I don't like being Comr. in Chief. I have to pitch into so many people - even my own staff sometimes. Yesterday I found one of my Egyptian A.D.C.s (a Major), six of my guard, and a Major of my cavalry escort all breaking my most strict orders for the

safety of the camp. I put my A.D.C. under arrest, to be tried by Ct. Ml. I flogged the 6 men of the guard, and I reduced the Cavalry Major to Captain (I have power to reduce 1 grade). Since that I have had to walk into Major Evans and the doctor. All these things worry me a great deal, but I am at my wits end to know how to protect my camels - they might be stampeded at any time. I found this Morning that nearly all the guard had tied their rifles on the camels' backs. I sent for the Egyptian General and pointed it out to him. He said 'Your Excellency has only to order it, and the guard will doubtless carry their rifles themselves' - what is to be done with such men. He thought it nothing that a guard over food, ammunition and all necessaries, in an enemy's country, liable to an attack at any moment, should tie their arms on the backs of the camels. But this is only one of the hundred thousand bêtises they are guilty of.

18th. Immediately after writing the above yesterday, a tremendous storm came on - many tents blown down and all saturated with rain . . . . I'm afraid I shall be delayed on my march. As it is I daren't go on until I have had the road examined, for of course there are no roads. We passed yesterday over such ground that if we have the same in front of us it would be impossible after this rain to get the guns over. As it was yesterday, in a dry state, we got along with great difficulty. I am now sending Colonel Farquhar, Capt. Herlth and 80 sabres to reconnoitre 10 miles in advance. If they report the country practicable I shall march when the moon gets up tonight. The poor men were in a bad predicament last night. I was out the first thing this morning riding round the camp and they looked like drowned rats. However, they bear everything cheerfully. They have many qualities of excellent soldiers. I'm afraid our biscuit will have suffered. It is a kind of dried bread - once wetted it is spoilt, for it turns musty and uneatable and we have nothing else to depend on for the men. I applied for tarpaulins which I did not get, but was told 'to put the biscuit in the tents when it rained'. I requested them in return, to 'arrange with the rain that it should only fall when we had our tents pitched and on no account to do so when we were on the line of march and unprepared' ! I take no tents beyond Dueim as all the

camels will be required to carry water. Over 100 camels have died within the last four or five days. I found out the Bashi Bazooks on the rear guard killed several camels to eat - they wanted meat and so helped themselves and I lost transport animals. When it was reported to me the officer who made the report begged of me not to let it be known he had done so as they would murder him. They had kept him off with their carbines when he went to see what they were about. The only good about these Bashi Bazooks is that they go in advance of the Army and I should probably get information through them of the approach of the enemy. But Herlth tells me he has difficulty in getting them to go far enough ahead and they think of nothing but loot. They are so undisciplined and untrustworthy that I cannot place them to fight with the regular troops and I really don't know what I should do with them in action. If I could only take out the Turks from amongst them and let the rest return to Khartoum I should be glad. I shall not get to Dueim until the day after tomorrow anyhow, and not then unless Farquhar's report of the road is good.

Dueim, Septr. 20th. Arrived here at 11 a.m. today - after an awful hot march. Therm.: 110° in my tent again, but a storm is brewing and may cool the air. Ala al-Din Pasha came out to meet the Army and to my regret I found some 2400 men of the garrison paraded two miles out to receive me - they ought not to have been brought out in this heat. They looked very well in new white clothing. Yesterday we encamped at Berair, a very large Arab village or town which has been loyal throughout. I didn't want the Bashi Bazooks to get into it, for if they did I knew what would happen, and so directly we encamped about a mile off I sent a strong guard into the town, and put both Seckendorff and Mattiaga (German officer) on picquet with a chain of sentries all round the camp, with orders to allow no one to pass through the line. The unusual circumstances of two of my Staff being out on picquet showed the Bashi Bazooks I 'intended business' and it saved the town from all kinds of evils. We encamped in acres of standing corn - next morning there wasn't a stalk 6000 animals had been at work on it. However, I ordered compensation to the people . . . .

I am very sorry the letter . . . . containing the account of young Massey's business didn't reach you. It was a long letter, in fact about a week's diary. Massey was most anxious to be allowed to go out scouting. I knew I couldn't trust to his judgement so I refused, but he pressed so to be allowed to go that I gave permission on condition he took some irregular soldiers who knew the country with him. I then left for a reconnaissance up river. The next day Massey went out taking an Egyptian lieutenant with him but no irregular soldiers. He got lost, was two days and nights in the jungle without a drop of water, his horse died, [and] he was left for dead by the lieut. who stuck to him like a brick. Massey wrote me a letter on a leaf of his pocket book telling me he was dying in the desert through having neglected my orders. He wrote very pluckily, begging me to forgive him and asking me to accept his prismatic compass and to give his watch and ring to a cousin . . . . The lieut. took the note and then Massey laid himself out on his back and died as he thought. The lieut. then tried to find his way to the river and succeeded fortunately, but he was nearly dead. A party was sent out and traced Massey. First they found his revolver, then his dead horse, then his turban. They followed up the tracks until it was too dark to see and then tied up their horses to a bush to remain all the night on the track and take it up again in the morning. In a short time one of the men thought he heard a sound of something in the bushes a little way off, and went in the dark in the direction, taking his rifle, thinking it might be an Arab. He found Massey at the point of death. He gave him water wh. revived him but he was quite delirious. He drank all the water, a number of skins, the men had taken with them, and vomited it up again. He was held on a horse by a man on each side and brought into camp. No man ever had a narrower escape and his sufferings must have been awful - fancy not a drop of water in that burning desert for two days and nights. I gave the rescuer £25. But would you believe that Massey had his compass with him: he went out on the east bank of the river which ran due North and South - he had only to look at his compass and go to the West and he would have struck the Nile at once. It would seem impossible for a man to lose himself under these circumstances . . . . It is incredible stupidity! (70)

The Souakin and Berber route is open again I hear. I am very anxious to get on as a single licking to the Mahdi ought to put a stop to the rebellion.

Dueim, Septr. 24th 83.

I shall be leaving . . . . in a day or two and so this letter is possibly the last regular one you will get for some little time. I don't know whether my post men will have pluck enough to travel regularly up and down the line of communication. Anyhow you must not be surprised or anxious if you don't get letters as usual. I am obliged to go 100 miles out of my way to have a chance only of getting water. The route I had fixed upon proved too devoid of water supply. I have hopes of finding it in sufficient quantity by a more southern route, but as I say it is 100 miles longer. I have started off a force of 2,400 Infantry, 100 Cavalry, and 5 guns to the first post this morning. They will send me back a report on the water supply and if sufficient I shall march off the main body. I have sent an Engineer to improve the supply by digging wells if necessary and also the chain pump I had made at Khartoum. I find now I have not enough camels. I have to leave a lot of ammunition behind, and still there are some camels wanting and not a single one left to bring up provisions etc. from here. Nor have I one to carry any soldiers who may fall sick. This is a bad state of affairs. I have told the Gov. Genl. he must buy 1,000 more, but the question is where - all the country has been ransacked for the 5,000 we have. He thinks he may get me 500 but it will take time. Meanwhile the loads of the camels which die will have to be left on the ground, and if biscuit is not despatched from here within 18 days after we have left we shall be at Obeid without any after what we take is consumed . . . .

The following are the posts I shall establish . . . . Shat - 16 miles; Zeraiga - 16; Sarakhna - 32; Naurabi - 16; Agaila - 24; Johan - 32; Abli - 28; Beliab - 22; Om Sheik - 12; Rahad - 14; Kasghil - 14; Melbais - 24, the last post before reaching Obeid. At all the above places I am told I may find water sufficient, but I shall send a party forward to each, as I go on, to report



Many stages are two days march, in this heat, and with slow going animals. I shall have to carry water at all of them. I have issued in conjunction with the G.G. a proclamation to the Arab chiefs promising that forgiveness will still be extended to them if they come in and submit. I think Asakir will come in when we get to his country (between Sarakhna and Agaila). I shall disarm his tribe if he does, and take him with us. I have also written to King Adam of Tegella, telling him I am now advancing and he had better come to meet me at Rahad. I paid a man £25 yesterday who had been to Obeid and brought me that scrap of useless paper from the priest - last evening the poor chap had it all stolen from him. He has promised to take another letter to Obeid to an influential man there. I am sending him, but I much fear he'll be found out this time and killed . . . Mr. Power of the Pictorial World will have to go back, ill - but Mr. Vizzileti [sic] still draws for the Graphic. Major Martin, I'm sorry to hear, has been ill again and can't join me. Colborne I have refused to have again. He accuses me of 'stabbing him in the back', but he was too disreputable and brought disgrace and contempt on the Staff. Mr. O'Donovan, corresp. of Daily News, got drunk again yesterday and I hear has bought a quantity of poisonous brandy for the march, off a Greek here who has come up river from Khartoum. I shall have it all broken 'by accident on purpose' . . . . We took a spy yesterday.

Forty of the enemy's cavalry are just now reported to have been seen by a Bashi Bazook this evening two miles from camp. I have no more news . . . . You may very well hear of what we do at Obeid by telegram before you get this letter.

On the March, Kordofan, Sept. 30th/83.

We are now launched fairly into the enemy's country and I have discovered something which makes me write to you to tell you that it is quite probable you will not hear from me for some time, perhaps two months . . . . I have discovered that my troops are not good enough to be relied on to convey supplies from post to post. The country swarms with Arabs and it would be a service of danger, for which the Egyptian soldiery have not sufficient

military feeling, or loyalty. It is too disgusting. I had arranged for military posts, distance from each other some 20 miles or so (where water was obtainable). They were to consist of about 200 men each in well fortified positions, and they would send escorts with supplies of food, ammunition, etc. from post to post to the front. Keeping up our communications with the base, each post too was to be a depot, where in case of a reverse one could, on falling back, depend upon finding a supply of food, water, and ammunition. All my plans are upset, for I am informed in a way there is no mistaking that I can put no trust whatever in these posts' forwarding supplies, so to establish them would be only to reduce the strength of my column for no purpose. (71) I believe the soldiers would do anything but it is the officers who can not be relied on. A more useless, ignorant, contemptible lot of men never existed. They are utterly ignorant of their profession, they are not in the least respected by the men, and the orders of anyone under the rank of major are quite disregarded. The majors and colonels are as a rule perfectly useless. So I have now to cut myself adrift from communication with the outer world, and from my supplies. I hope to have finished the fighting before my biscuit is exhausted. I have 50 days' supply and if I beat the Mahdi, the country will be at my feet and I can get supplies of grain and cattle. On the other hand, if my biscuit is exhausted first I must attack some tribes and loot grain. I can not tell you how disappointed I am at having to cut the army off from its source of supply and give up my lines of communication. But I am commanding an Army officered by men who will not undertake the ordinary risks of warfare, who cannot be depended on to escort supplies, who will not go willingly on picquet or outpost duty, and who expect in the case of attack the Artillery and Cavalry to be all brought inside an Infantry square!

I think that we shall probably meet the Mahdi's forces for the first time the day after tomorrow, possibly tomorrow. He has sent a body of, they say, 12,000 men to meet us before we get to the place on our line of route where we might be joined by the King of Tegella's men (they must think he is going to send some). My great trouble is the enormous number of camels carrying food

and water. If I take them all inside the square I can only have it two deep, which is not strong enough to meet the determined attack of the Arabs, and if I leave camels outside the Arabs are sure to attack and drive them away if possible. I am going to take as many as I can inside and mass the rest in [the] rear of and close to the square. On our being attacked they must be made to lie down and have their legs tied. The men can then fire over them. Perhaps many will be killed and there will be great confusion if they manage to get up. The enemy will probably try to drive them in on the square and so break it, in wh. case they must be shot down. So much for military detail . . .

All my thoughts and energy must now be concentrated upon crushing this Mahomet Achmet (Mahdi) and I fully expect to do so notwithstanding all the faults . . . I have to work with. Mahomet Achmet has evidently been informed of all my intended movements which we had thought to keep secret - otherwise he could not have sent off a force to meet us as he appears to have done. But to show you the way in which he is [served] by the people who believe in him: the day before I left Dueim Major Evans, my Interpreter and 'Intelligence Officer' as he likes to be called, brought to my tent two men armed with spears who had been taken by our scouts. He said one was a soldier who had been taken with the others by the Mahdi at Obeid and the other a slave. The soldier (black), who was certainly the most intelligent man I have met in this part of the world, told me that he had deserted and left Obeid 8 days before. He gave me a lot of information. He was recognised by some men with the Army who knew him formerly. He was enlisted into one of the Regts. and marched with us for 4 days. At the end of 4 days he stole a camel and went off as hard as he could to Obeid, taking with him two months advance of pay, a rifle, 120 rounds of ammunition, a new set of clothing, besides the camel. He was a spy of the Mahdi's and has been able to collect and give him all information. Evans told me afterwards that he had heard the man telling several of the army that 3 men had attempted to murder the Mahdi by stabbing him, but 'their knives would not enter his body'. So much for my 'intelligence' officer - not intelligent. He was allowed to preach this to an ignorant mussalman soldiery for 4 days. (72)

The heat on the march is intense, and I am most anxious to meet with the enemy before my men get exhausted. I have about 10,000 and I think I ought to beat any number of the Arabs if I can only make the officers keep their heads - and the men fire low. I have just been interrupted by Mr. O'Donovan for me to see and make any correction of a telegram he is sending to the Daily News. So far, thank God, I have reason to hope we shall find water, for I believe we shall come on a mountain watercourse which is now full. It loses itself in the sands at Nerobi but beyond that has a good supply of water - so our guides and scouts say. I shall be thankful to get to Obeid and this affair over, for it is the source of enormous anxiety to me.

On the march. Kordofan. Oct. 4th/83.

As I told you in my last I am obliged to abandon my line of communication and we are now cut off from the outer world. We have up to this been very fortunate in finding pools of rain water, which have been formed on the surface of the ground and sufficient for the force. Today we have drunk the one we have encamped on dry but my reconnoitres have discovered another on the route for tomorrow and I march for it tomorrow morning. I find that little reliance can be placed on our guides. Yesterday 100 cavalry I had sent out to reconnoitre a place called Sarakhana 16 miles distance were led astray into impassable ground, with grass higher than the horses' heads, and were there fired upon by two Arabs, scouts I suppose. Capt. Herith killed one of them and a soldier the other. No water was obtainable and they didn't get back until 9 at night, having been out since 6 in the morning. Had I allowed the Army to march instead of sending to reconnoitre (and many officers were quite annoyed at my not doing so), I don't know what would have happened. The party never got to Sarakhana and I have sent out another today. It is now 6 p.m. and they have not returned. It is possible they may have had a fight, for there is a direct road from Obeid to Sarakhana and the Mahdi may have chosen that place to send his force to, wh. we hear he has despatched to interrupt the march. I impressed upon Farquhar, whom I sent in command, that he was on no account to risk a defeat, as a reverse to our arms just now



would have a very disastrous effect. I hope he won't be rash. I have just sent to light a fire two miles out to guide him to the camp as it is quite dark. There are wells at Sarakhana. If he finds the place deserted and wells filled up, I shall encamp on the pool of water we have discovered and send on half my force to take possession of the place, and open up the wells. They will take on all our water skins on camels. This will give them 3 days' supply while they work at the wells. They will then fill some of the skins and send them guarded by a Regt. to meet us half way and I shall advance. If they find the enemy in force at Sarakhana I shall build a zeriba (a square of prickly bushes and branches of trees), leave all our baggage with a Battalion and two guns to take care of it, and march my whole force to take the place tomorrow morning. We shall find the wells there open as the enemy will have wanted them themselves. I shall then bring up our baggage. I now hear that there is a broad belt of dense impenetrable jungle some miles deep all along the Khor or water course we are depending upon from Norabi. If this is true I don't know what I shall do, for the Army cannot march through it. At present too I know nothing of the water supply between Sarakhana and Nerobi, whether there is any or not, and with the very existence of the Army, the lives of 10,000 men, dependent upon my decision and no reliable information, the anxiety is very great - almost too much. Fancy marching an Army of this strength through a country where one is entirely dependent upon pools of rain water - 10,000 men and 6,000 animals to be supplied daily and no certainty of finding a pool from day to day. I have also an Army which through the badness of its officers cannot be relied upon for picquet and outpost duty and refuses to take the ordinary risks of warfare in escorting provisions, ammunition, etc., to the front, and an Army which has never been taught that an order is intended to be obeyed.

9.30 p.m. Farquhar returned with Seckendorff and Mattiaga and [the] reconnoitring party. They found Sarakhan had been deserted this morning - they found water in pools along the road at 5 miles, 16 miles, and at Sarakhana. A few Arabs [were] met with, one of our men badly wounded. He had dropped behind, his horse having been 'done up' - they rode 60 miles. I have too few





Cavalry, and am obliged to work them very hard. I write these few lines as I have just been told by Ala al-Din Pasha he is sending off a despatch on camel to Dueim.

## Epilogue

No further messages, official or private, were received from General Hicks, although presumably he continued to write. The events of the month between 4 October and 5 November may, however be briefly summarized from other sources. The army continued its slow advance, increasingly hampered by an inadequate water supply and its poor intelligence. Disputes over strategy and tactics and involving the competing claims of Hicks, Ala al-Din, and the Egyptian officers, especially Hussayn Pasha Mazhar, continued. The Mahdi, on the other hand, had from El Obeid sent out raiding parties to harry the unwieldy expeditionary force, and this they did increasingly, disrupting its progress and dissolving its morale. Only on 1 November did the main Mahdist army leave El Obeid to meet the invaders. On 3 and 4 November testing attacks were launched by the Ansar. Having camped for the night of 4-5 November near Shaykan, surrounded by the Mahdists, the army resumed its march on the morning of the 5th. Almost immediately the Ansar attacked from all directions, and the Egyptian army, marching in three squares, was forced back upon itself, so that in the melee the crowded and panic-stricken troops must have fired upon each other. Within minutes hope of repulsing the onslaught was lost, and the Ansar quickly annihilated the entire army. Only a few hundred survived to be taken prisoner. Among the dead were all the European participants in the march, the governor-general, and the leading Egyptian officers. Hicks himself reportedly fought to the last, and died with great courage.

News of the great Mahdist victory reached Cairo on 22 November, ending weeks of rumours that Hicks had been successful but giving rise to new rumours, and vain hopes, that all had not been lost. When the destruction of the army was finally confirmed, a new phase in the Mahdist revolt began. The Egyptian garrisons in Darfur and the Bahr al-Ghazal soon fell to the Ansar, while those along the White Nile were withdrawn. The British government, in consultation with the new agent and consul-general in Cairo, Sir Evelyn Baring, advised the Egyptian government to abandon the Sudan, and insisted that its advice

must be accepted. The problem arose then of withdrawing the large number of Egyptian and other military and civilian personnel from the Sudan, for which purpose the mission of General Gordon was undertaken. The fate of that mission is well known.

## Notes

1. For a note on De Coetlogon, see Richard Hill, A Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan, 2nd ed., London 1967, p.111; on Colborne, p.101; Farquhar, p.125; Evans, p.121.
2. General Valentine Baker Pasha (1827 - 87) was commandant of the Egyptian gendarmerie and was a brother of Sir Samuel Baker. In 1875 Valentine Baker had been convicted of indecent assault and common assault upon a young woman in a railway carriage in England. The scandal destroyed his promising career in the British army, and led him to take up military service in the East. In 1884 he led an army against the Mahdists on the Red Sea coast. See Hill, ibid., pp. 69-70. George Sartorius Pasha (1840-1912) was a British officer on Baker's staff, who served as his second-in-command in the 1884 campaign. See Hill, ibid., p.332.
3. Lord Dufferin, the British ambassador in Istanbul, was then in Cairo to report to the British government on the administration of Egypt and to suggest reforms.
4. This may refer to the defeat by the Mahdists in December of an Egyptian force in the Gezira. See Holt, The Mahdist State p.68.
5. Baron Gotz Burkhard von Seckendorff was a German officer who had volunteered to join Hicks's staff. He was killed at Shaykan. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.335. The second officer to whom Hicks refers was probably Baron Korff, a Prussian who served only briefly at Khartoum.
6. El Obeid.
7. Sir Samuel Baker Pasha (1821-93), the explorer and administrator.

8. Sir Edward Malet, British consul-general in Egypt since 1879.
9. 'Umar Pasha Lutfi. See 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Rafī'ī, Miṣr wa-al-Sūdān fī awā'il ahd al-iḥtilāl, Cairo, 1942, p.12.
10. General Sir Archibald Alison was in command of the British army of occupation in Egypt.
11. Sir Evelyn Wood was sirdar (commander in chief) of the new Egyptian Army established after the disbandment of the old force following the British occupation.
12. "New Army" [?].
13. Lt. Col. J.D.H. Stewart was commissioned in 1882 to report on the situation in the Sudan. The result was published as Report on the Soudan by Lieut-Col. Stewart, Egypt No.11 (1883), C.3670. Stewart was killed by Sudanese tribesman while trying to reach Egypt from the siege of Khartoum in 1884.
14. 'Abd al-Qadir Pasha Hilmi, (1837-1908), the governor-general, a vigorous and competent officer. His successor, 'Ala' al-Din Pasha Siddiq, was appointed in February, but the appointment was not made public for some time. He was killed at Shaykan.
15. The bishop was Francesco Sogaro, who had succeeded Daniele Comboni as vicar apostolic of Central Africa. He left the Sudan in December 1883, having evacuated the Catholic mission. Cf. Hill, Biographical dictionary, p.341, who puts the bishop's arrival at "autumn" 1883.
16. The Bashi-bazooks (Turkish başı-bozuk) were irregular cavalry, usually of Balkan or Turkish origin, but including also Sudanese, notably Shayqiyya tribesmen.



17. This is possibly a reference to the evacuation of Shakka or the defeat of an Egyptian force at the battle of Umm Waraqa in early November 1882. See Holt, The Mahdist State pp.74-75.
  
18. This is apparently a reference to the new General Governor of the Red Sea Littoral, Rashid Kamil Bey, rather than to the new governor of Suakin, Muhammad Tawfiq Bey, who took up that post in February 1883. See R.L. Hill, "Rulers of the Sudan", Sudan Notes and Records, XXXII, 1,1950, pp. 92-3.
  
19. Muhammad Sharif Pasha.
  
20. This is probably a reference to the religious captured by the Mahdists at Dilling in September 1882. They were Father Luigi Bonomi, Father Josef Ohrwalder, Sisters A. Andreis, M. Caprini, and E. Pesavento, and two lay brothers, G. Mariani and O. Regnotto. (See Elias Toniolo and Richard Hill, eds., The Opening of the Nile Basin, London, 1974, p.27.)
  
21. Possibly a reference to Alfonso Roversi, an Italian Protestant anti-slavery inspector who reportedly embraced Islam after the capture of Dilling in 1882. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.321.
  
22. Cf. Colborne, With Hicks Pasha, p.40.
  
23. A reference possibly to 'Abd al-Qadir's defeat of the Mahdists at Ma<sup>c</sup>tuq in the Gezira on 27 January. See Holt, The Mahdist State, p.68.
  
24. Bara surrendered on 6 January, El Obeid on the 19th. Wingate (Mahdism, p.73) records that the news of the towns' capture reached Khartoum on 11 February. Hicks was informed of the news at Berber in a message from Col. Stewart in Khartoum. See Colborne, With Hicks Pasha, p.62.

25. In fact, 'Abd-al-Qadir had won a notable victory at Mashra al-Da<sup>ci</sup>, north of Sennar, on 24 February. See Holt, The Mahdist State, p.69.
26. Hussayn Pasha Mazhar, deputy governor-general of the Sudan, and later chief of staff during the Kordofan campaign. He was killed at Shaykan.
27. Possibly Musa wad Hilu of the Dighaym Baggara, brother of the Khalifa 'Ali wad Hilu. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.284.
28. al-Kawa.
29. Cf. Colborne, With Hicks Pasha, pp.79-80.
30. Sulayman Pasha Niyazi. For a biographical note, see Hill, Biographical Dictionary, pp.349-50.
31. According to Hill (Ibid., p.349) he was of Circassian origin.
32. Giegler Pasha was acting governor-general during Gordon's first governor-generalship (1879), and was made deputy governor-general in 1880. He was again acting governor-general in 1881 and 1882, and conducted several campaigns against the Mahdists in the Gezira and Kordofan. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.136.
33. Salih Agha al-Makk, a Shayqi general of the Egyptian Army. He was responsible for raising the Mahdist siege of Sennar in 1882. He later surrendered to the Mahdists at Massalamia. See Hill, Ibid., pp.328-9; Holt, The Mahdist State, pp. 66-7, 69.
34. Colborne absolved Walker of blame for this "fiasco", and implicitly criticized Hicks's conduct of the incident. See With Hicks Pasha, pp. 80-1.

35. I have been unable to identify further this Greenburg [Greenbury?].
36. The anti-slave trade convention of 1877.
37. The convention stipulated that the sale of slaves, not slavery, must end in 1889, not 1884. See Holt, The Mahdist State, p.37.
38. The Mahdi had refused to allow his followers to use firearms until during the siege of El Obeid. See Ibid., p.63.
39. Makhadat Abu Zayd.
40. Marcopoli Bey, secretary to the governor-general.
41. See above, note 5.
42. Possibly a slanderous reference to Gheorghios Dimitrios Douloghiu, the chief doctor of the Egyptian Army in the Sudan. He died at Shaykan. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.114.
43. Sa'id Hussayn al-Jimi'abi, a Sudanese officer who in 1884 was executed by General Gordon after attempting to lead his force of irregulars over to the Mahdi. See Ibid., p.325.
44. The battle of Marabi'a (al-Marabi'at). The Mahdist amir, 'Umar al-Makashfi, was among those killed.
45. Sulayman Pasha.
46. Ahmad al-Makashfi was killed at the battle of Jabal Saqadi in 1883. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.35.

47. Shaykh 'Asakir wad Abu Kalam of the Jimi' tribe, and Shaykh al-Manna Isma'il, a religious notable of the Jawama'a tribe.
48. Jabal Qadir, to where the Mahdi had performed the hijra after his manifestation in 1881.
49. The London headquarters of the Anti-Slavery Society.
50. Colonel Colborne. Many of his despatches were reprinted in With Hicks Pasha.
51. Lord Granville, the foreign secretary.
52. Muhammad Sharif Pasha.
53. In fact, the Kababish suffered greatly for their ambivalence. Shaykh al-Tum Fadi Allah Salim was killed by the Mahdists soon after they took El Obeid. In 1886-87 the Khalifa Abdallahi, the Mahdi's successor, sent forces against the tribe, and Shaykh Salih Fadi Allah Salim was killed. See Holt, The Mahdist State, pp.71, 71n., 154-5; Hill, Biographical Dictionary, pp.327, 362.
54. Karari, north of Omdurman.
55. Theodore II committed suicide in 1868.
56. King Adam Dabbalu of Taqali in the Nuba Mountains. Eventually he sided with the Mahdi against the government, but fell into disfavour and died a prisoner in 1884. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.25.
57. One ardeb is about 297 lbs.

58. The use of pieces of cloth (takaki) as currency was in fact a survival from the days of the Fur sultanate, when a major tax (the takkiyya) was assessed in such pieces. See R. S. O'Fahey, State and Society in Dar Fur, London, 1980, p.102.
  
59. For an account of this ill-fated project see Richard Hill, Sudan Transport, London, 1965, pp. 34-48; and by the same author, "The Suakin-Berber Railway, 1885", in Sudan Notes and Records, XX, 1, 1937, pp.107-24.
  
60. Frank Power was also correspondent for The Times. He fell ill and did not accompany the Kordofan expedition in its final phase. He was killed with Col. Stewart in 1884 while trying to reach Egypt. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, pp.308-9. Edmund O'Donovan had made his name as a correspondent in Central Asia. He was killed at Shaykan. Ibid., p.298.
  
61. Frank Vizetelly was a correspondent and artist for the Illustrated London News. He was killed at Shaykan. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.374. Cf. Colborne, With Hicks Pasha, pp.167-8.
  
62. Rudolf von Slatin, an Austrian, had been governor of Dar Fur since 1881. He surrendered to the Mahdists at Dara in March 1884, escaped to Egypt from Omdurman in 1895, and was later inspector-general of the Sudan under the Anglo-Egyptian regime.
  
63. Ilyas Pasha Ahmad Umm Birayr, a Ja'ali former governor of Kordofan, joined the Mahdi's cause after the fall of El Obeld. His association with the government brought him under suspicion, however, and he died in prison in 1898. See Hill, Biographical Dictionary, p.180.
  
64. <sup>6</sup> Uthman Abu Bakr Digna (Osman Digna), later one of the greatest of the Mahdi's commanders.



65. Shaykh al-Tahir al-Tayyib al-Majdhub, head of the Majdhubiyya tariqa, a man of great prestige in the Eastern Sudan, who joined the Mahdi's cause in 1883.
66. Possibly a reference to Yusuf Pasha, governor of Sennar from 1879. See Hill, "Rulers", p.93.
67. Ernst Marno Bey, an Austrian who had been governor of Fazughli since 1881.
68. The Bastier pump was a simple, light-weight pump, with the capacity to lift some 2000 (not 3000) gallons of water an hour from depths of up to sixty (not fifty) feet. The pump was apparently a standard piece of equipment in the British Army in the late nineteenth century. A complete description of its specifications, with illustrations, is in the Manual of Field Engineering, 1877. The Norton "Abyssinian" tube well was used to obtain water from lesser depths. I am grateful to Lieut.-Colonel C. T. P. Holland, curator of the Royal Engineers Museum at Chatham, for this information.
69. The French consul. Cf. Colborne, With Hicks Pasha, p.89.
70. Cf. Colborne's account of the incident in ibid., pp.175-82.
71. Hicks's official report of the decision to abandon the line of communication indicates that it was taken as a result of strong advice from Ala al-Din Pasha. This report, dated 3 October, was the last received from him. See Wingate, Mahdism, pp.80-82; and the diary of Abbas Bey (Sudan Archive, Durham, 178/3/1).
72. There is another account of this episode in the diary of Abbas bey.

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